NO SMALL SIN

GENNA BLACK

NO SMALL SIN

GENNA BLACK

CONTENTS

Note from the Author

Chapter 1
Chapter 2
Chapter 3
Chapter 4
Chapter 5
Chapter 6
Chapter 7
Chapter 8
Chapter 9
Chapter 10
Chapter 11
Chapter 12
Chapter 13
Chapter 14
Chapter 15
Chapter 16
Chapter 17
Chapter 18
Chapter 19
Chapter 20
Chapter 21
Chapter 22
Chapter 23
Chapter 24
Chapter 25
Chapter 26
Chapter 27
Chapter 28
Chapter 29
Chapter 30
Chapter 31
Epilogue
Bonus Scene

Also by Genna Black
Acknowledgments

About the Author

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Copyright 2023 © Genna Black

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or used in any manner without written permission of the copyright owner except for the use of quotations in a book review.

Editing: Tiffany Grimm
Proofreading: Amy Perkins
Cover Design: Quirky Circe
Formatting: Unalive Promotions

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

No Small Sin contains extreme profanity, graphic violence, graphic sexual descriptions, and gore. Reader discretion is advised.

For a detailed list of triggers, please visit www.authorgennablack.com

To Lindsey, I miss you every day.

“I was never really insane, except on occasions where my heart was touched.” - Edgar Allen Poe

CHAPTER ONE

Beck

For weeks I'd known who was next. *Alexander fucking Benz*.

I could almost feel his panic-stricken pulse beneath my fingertips now, easily imagining the moment it would flutter and then cease to beat under my touch altogether.

I'd been waiting for the stars to align, and tonight they would.

Stalking prey was something I considered neither thrilling nor tedious. It fell somewhere in between — meeting a baser need while also sometimes assuring that my ass was covered when any questions arose.

And they would.

They always did.

Yet, no one ever seemed to ask the right ones, blind to the facts. People often see what they want to see.

And what I show them.

This time would be no different, with only one exception — The Stalk.

There are only *two* things in the entire world that make my heart thud in any substantial way against the inner shell of my ribcage. Two things that would see me out of bed at five o'clock on a Saturday morning: the prospect of freshly spilled blood *and* 18 holes before noon at South Shore Golf Course.

There was something in the early morning dew. The cold bite of the iron against my palm. The heavy smack of the clubhead against the ball. Watching it soar through the air, hitting its mark with near-lethal precision almost every single fucking time.

I felt like a kid again, the air around me similar to those first early morning field trips, a time when I actually *felt*.

It did something for me in a way that not much else did. I *lived* for this shit.

Lucky for me, Alexander did too.

Or, perhaps cart staff at a golf course owned by your parents was one of the few jobs available to a person when your multiple sex offenses show up in criminal background checks. Though, it was on the national sex offender registry that I personally found what I was looking for. Having the ability to type in any address and search within a three mile radius for these absolute pieces of shit was a game changer for someone like me. Names, aliases, and exact locations. It was basically a fucking shopping list. The only other thing needed was a quick Google search to determine if their actual offenses made them truly worth my time or not.

In this case? Very much yes.

I opened the trunk of my SUV.

“Let me help you with that, *Sir*.” The muscle in my jaw ticked at the mere sound of his voice. My fingers itched to snap forward, to grab the lug wrench I’d deftly stored in an accessible side compartment next to my golf bag.

I flexed my hand and turned to face him. Inhaling a long and sharp breath through my nostrils, my eyes roved over the face I’d looked at probably a hundred times at this point through my computer screen.

I forced a tight smile. “Sure.”

I stepped out of the way, allowing him access to my bag.

I wanted nothing more than to hear the sound of his skull fracturing beneath the blunt force of the nearest heavy object.

The wrench. My irons.

The back hatch of my SUV would probably do the trick if I slammed it hard enough. A cervical fracture would almost be too easy.

He was right there, the base of his skull totally open and unprotected as he leaned over to heave my clubs over his shoulder.

Spinal cord injuries don’t require much effort. I could probably even make it look like an accident.

But it wasn’t time.

In reality, I didn’t have to be here today. In this particular case, I simply wanted to be. I enjoyed toying with my victims. Putting myself into their personal space for a short time, allowing them a glimpse.

The flash of recognition in their eyes later.

I followed him to the first available cart and he loaded my bag onto the back. One of the many benefits of having a membership at South Shore was having first access to tee times. I wasn't a regular here by any means, but I'd planned enough in advance that I had a bag tag showing that my fees were paid and Alexander was none the wiser regarding my real reason for stopping by on this gorgeous Saturday morning.

"Key's in the ignition. Enjoy your day."

I gave him a curt nod. I had the rest of the morning to think over how I'd make a solid and lasting impression on him later.

By my eleventh hole, I was feeling pretty zen. I took a moment to kick back in the seat of the cart. Resting my head against the back bar I closed my eyes, mulling over my options. At this point, Alexander was having a normal day at work. But within the next hour or so I would be leaving, and I would have the opportunity to unsettle him in the most delicious of ways if I played my cards right. A slow smile crept across my face.

The low whine of another cart approaching stirred me from my thoughts.

Great. The adult version of an ice cream truck. This was one way that I most certainly couldn't blend in with the crowd despite my best efforts in all other areas. I simply didn't see the appeal in getting blistered at eleven o'clock in the morning, and unfortunately, that was a regular thing for many golfers. I often wondered if they actually enjoyed the sport itself or if they just wanted an excuse to day drink.

I gathered myself with a long intake of breath and ran my hand over my face before opening my eyes.

Maybe steeling myself for a second longer would have prepared me.

Likely not.

Her waist-length raven-black hair was loosely braided to the side and held back from her face by one of those fleece headbands meant to keep your ears warm.

I was thankful for the unobstructed view.

I'd never seen a more flawless visage.

She stared up at me with big, round, slate grey doe eyes from behind a set of long, thick lashes. There was a smattering of freckles along the bridge of her nose and I had to stop myself from reaching out and playing a quick game of connect the dots.

“What can I get you to drink?” Dimples formed near each corner of her mouth.

“I, ah…” *Did I say I didn’t day drink?* “It’s eleven in the morning?” I grimaced.

She huffed a laugh. “I have water, babe.”

I would have trekked across the Kalahari Desert to purchase a single drop of water from her. “Sure, I’ll take a water.”

She turned back to her beverage cart, her short black tennis skirt riding up the back of her tanned thighs as she leaned across the seat to the cooler on the far side. Chill bumps dotted across the expanse of her smooth skin.

My cock jerked against the zipper of my pants.

This was new — something I’d willed my body to do on so many occasions I’d lost count. I’d long since given up any attempts at normalcy in that area of my life. It was simply something I wasn’t capable of. The only genuine interest I’d ever had in physical contact with another human being had always, *on every single occasion*, involved watching the light leave their eyes.

She wiggled the bottle in front of my face and my eyes refocused. “Oh, sorry,” I said, taking the drink. “I checked out there for a second.”

Her ridiculously soft, oversized jacket had fallen off of one shoulder. Unable to stop myself I reached out to pull it back into place. My fingertips grazed the plane of her exposed skin.

I shivered at the contact. “It’s fucking cold out here.”

“Yeah. They make us wear these stupid fucking skirts year-round. The tips are good though, so I guess I shouldn’t complain,” she shrugged. “And I have a little heater on my cart.”

I wanted to throw her over my shoulder and haul her straight to the nearest insulated structure with a central furnace.

Her face dropped a fraction just as I noted the whir of another approaching cart. “*Fucking great*,” she murmured before plastering another smile on her face, this one not quite reaching those big round eyes. There was something infinitesimally harsher in her gaze, now locked just above my right shoulder. It twisted something in my chest, an unfamiliar feeling. “Alex,” the name a curse on her delicate lips. “What are you doing out here?”

“Making rounds. Ranger’s out sick. Saw you over here and thought I’d stop for a drink,” he winked. I wanted to scoop his eyeball from his skull with my bare hand.

"You know I'm not allowed to serve you alcohol while you're working. I'm not losing my fucking job for you, Alex," she crossed her arms over her chest.

If looks could kill, I'd have had one less thing on my to-do list that night.

"Come on, Tate. Like my parents have a fucking clue what goes on here. Give me a beer."

She rolled her eyes and turned to grab a drink from the cooler. There was a bottle opener attached to the side. I watched intently as she cracked the top, and ever so slightly dragged a finger across the top of the cooler, dusting a nearly insignificant amount of *something* into the mouth of the bottle.

She spun around and made to hand him the beer. "You know what? On second thought, I do want a drink," I said, reaching for the bottle. I wrapped my hand around the neck and locked eyes with this woman who'd had my attention from the get-go, but now even more so and for an entirely different reason. Her grip tightened for a split second before she realized that there was simply no easy way around this.

Despite the visceral and unanticipated reaction my body had to her mere presence, I wasn't about to risk handing over my prey today.

I had no idea what she'd just tried to slip him.

In broad daylight.

At her job.

In front of a fucking stranger.

There was the flicker of a thought in the back of my mind that screamed at me to *punish her* for doing something so thoughtless, so fucking careless. I pushed it aside. I would come back to *that* later.

She relinquished her hold, a bit defeated, but seemingly entirely uncaring whether or not I drained it to the dregs.

"Well. Great. It's my break time. You two have a good one then," she rushed out, climbing onto her cart to make a quick exit before Alexander could find it in him to string two words together to form a sentence that was some semblance of an objection.

She turned the key in the ignition. I had no desire to keep her here in the presence of this absolute brickfucker, but I grabbed the steering wheel anyway.

She pressed the gas. When the cart didn’t move, she jerked her head to the side finally noticing the holdup.

I liked being in her space.

“I didn’t pay for my drinks.”

Her eyes flicked back and forth between my hand and my face. I quirked an eyebrow at her. She made no move to take the money. I leaned forward, giving her a knowing look. I placed the beer in the cup holder of the golf cart.

Her jacket had fallen from her shoulder again. I tucked the fifty behind the tight material of her tank top. “Keep the change.”

Before standing, I flipped the switch on the heater by her foot. Her mouth dropped open, but she said nothing before righting herself and leaving just as quickly as I stood.

Good girl.

“Weird bitch. I’ve tried for weeks to get her to talk to me like, at all. She fucking won’t.”

Shocker. “Why bother if you think she’s so weird?”

“Bro. Do you have eyes? She’s hot. I’m sure she thinks she’s too good for someone like me. Sometimes you just have to show them they’re *not*, you know what I mean?”

I should’ve let her give him the fucking beer. “Yeah. I think I know exactly what you mean.”

I climbed into the seat of my cart. “We’re neighbors, you know. She lives right next door,” he stated simply. “Maybe tonight I’ll show her.”

“Maybe,” I said. “Or maybe you’ll find yourself all tied up with something else.” I didn’t stick around long enough to enjoy the look of confusion on his face. The mere thought of him trying to rub his last three brain cells together over the next few hours trying to figure out what I meant by that was enough.

CHAPTER TWO

Beck

It was mind-and-body-numbingly cold outside. But I didn’t need to feel. Not for anything, but especially not this.

Ijah would be pissed that I’d strayed outside my contracts again, but it was the *nature of the beast*, if you will. He'd known that from the moment we’d first crossed paths.

I was twelve years old the day I killed my brother.

It had been just the two of us for a long time before that. My dad was around in the sense that he held custody and we lived in the house he owned, but he’d always cared more about drugs than anything else despite the fact that they always seemed to find a way to *take*.

Everything.

Including my mom.

Rue was fifteen. We took care of one another in the only ways we knew how. I don’t think either of us felt any kind of real affection toward the other. We’d never been shown any to learn what it was like.

We’d also never been shown proper gun safety, yet our dad left handguns lying on seemingly every available surface of the house.

I couldn’t count on one hand the number of times Rue pointed a pistol directly at my head, laughing that it was fine; the safety was on.

The memory of exactly what happened that day always seemed to be just beyond my reach. I'd only done what I’d seen him do again and again.

It was fine.

The safety was on.

Except… this time it wasn’t.

And when the hollow-point bullet blew apart the frontal bone of his skull, something deep within me also fractured beyond repair.

I felt nothing and everything all at once.

The blood. There was so much of it.

And it called to me even now.

The day went by in a blur until there was a knock at the door. With Rue's lifeless body still cold on the floor, I answered.

I'd seen Ijah around before. He was young, nineteen or so. My dad always seemed so on edge when he dropped by for a visit.

It clicked for me at that moment — another living, breathing body on my doorstep — that I needed to do something. I needed help. He'd seen my predicament, the subsequent emptiness behind my eyes, and I think somehow that was enough for him.

Looking back, it probably made his job easier to only have one kid to deal with knowing now the reason for his visit.

He'd needed someone willing to get their hands dirty, a protégé of sorts. I needed an outlet. A way to sate the barely-contained violent craving that had only just manifested outside my mind for the first time.

My dad owed Ijah a debt that he'd never be able to repay, so when he came home later that night, Ijah splattered his brains against the dining room wall.

The fear rolling off of him in undulating waves when he saw Rue's body at his feet, recognizing that he was next, fed something in me I hadn't realized existed.

A small taste of what was out there waiting for me.

I watched, unflinching, and with the blood spray still wet on my face, I flicked a match on the kerosene-soaked house and walked away from the life that made me.

I've chased the high that came with the taste of that fear every day since.

My day job slakes the need for the most part, but sadistic bastards who know you're coming for them are nothing compared to those unsuspecting, random acts of *kindness*.

Which brings me to the south side of Fate Trace.

To *Alexander*.

He lived in a townhouse-style apartment complex, which made things trickier. There were likely added layers of security that most homes didn't have despite the fact that the place was more or less a dump — typical for south Fate Trace. I would also need to be sure he didn't have anyone else inside before I moved forward, which was harder to do without the ability to see in all of the windows.

But the risk was part of the fun.

He entered the lower level front door of an end unit as I watched from the street.

I waited.

One beat.

Two.

He appeared again lugging a bag of trash in each hand. He clunked around to the back of the building to the dumpster and I made my way to his now open front door.

Luck was on my side, just as it always was on nights like this one. It was as if the universe knew I had a need that must *always* be met.

Slipping inside, I listened.

Silence.

There was no one else here, at least for the time being. But I didn't need long to do what I'd come to do.

I stepped into the shadow of the door, twisting the braided fishing line between my fingers. They ached to make quick work of the task ahead.

He re-entered the apartment, his back to me as he closed the door and slid the chain lock into place.

Before he had time to register what was happening, I twisted the line around his neck. He choked on his panic as I kicked his feet out from under him and drug his writhing body up the set of stairs that led from the bottom-level kitchen to the living area.

He clawed at the line tight around his throat.

"Wha- th-," he rasped, recognition in his eyes as he took me in. I jerked the line tighter. Blood beaded along the indentation across the front of his neck and his eyes bulged.

I liked that.

"Did the woman you held down and fucked without her consent have the same look in her eyes as you do now?" He grunted, fighting uselessly against my grip. "Was she *this* afraid*?*" He struggled against my hold. "Lucky for you, living every moment for the rest of your life with the memory of what I'm about to do to you will be minutes at most. A luxury she wasn’t afforded.” I lifted him up, inhaling deeply, the cord biting into the palm of my hand. The acrid scent of his cheap cologne burned my nostrils.

Disgusting.

The scent triggered something deep within the recesses of my mind.

It nearly splintered my resolve and obliterated my best intentions for Alexander’s end, but I needed this.

Most people have rituals and routines that get them through each day. This was no different.

This was my religion.

He mumbled incoherently. I tightened the cord.

I longed for the moment his body would fall limp in my grasp. No other end had the same effect.

I had always made a solid effort to remain in good physical shape. I was well-practiced in varying self-defense martial arts. Yet, my favorite method was this, requiring only the better part of five minutes and less exertion by my hand than the pounds of pressure needed to crack a fucking egg.

Life is funny like that.

He went lax and I inhaled an easier breath, exhaled a more settled one.

I released him, his body falling to the floor with a thud at the same moment the front door clamored open, only to be halted by the chain lock.

“Alex?” a female voice called. “I saw your car out front, and one I didn’t recognize. Open the fucking door, it’s cold!”

There was no mistaking that voice — the way it fucked me up inside. The few sentences I’d heard her speak were seared into my brain. Irremovable, because somehow she managed to affect me in a way that no one else ever had.

What the fuck was she doing here?

Impatiently, she shoved on the door again.

The chain snapped. “*Shit*. Sorry.”

I’d never been more royally fucked than I was in that moment.

The only hope I had was that she’d fuck around downstairs for a few moments longer trying to fix it. And even then, I really wasn’t sure how I’d manage to fumble my way out of this one without the end result being another body to drop at the crematorium tonight.

I’d found myself in a lot of sticky situations over the years, but none of them had even remotely prepared me for this. The mere thought of her taking her last breath at my hand was both revolting and somehow still just as alluring as any other warm body had ever been to me.

Footsteps sounded on the stairway.

“Is there someone else here with you? You texted me to come over. I thought you meant like… now, but I can come ba—” her words cut off abruptly as she took in the scene before her.

Her mouth fell open. She looked down at Alexander, then looked me dead in the eye. “Get fucked. You did *not*. What the fuck have you done? This is bad. So fucking bad.”

I jerked my knife from where it was clipped to my belt, flicked it open, and had the curved blade to her throat in an instant.

Her back pressed flush to my front nearly crumbled my resolve.

I gripped her tighter. “Don’t think for a fucking second that I won’t end you where you stand. That little stunt you tried to pull this morning? That was nothing compared to this. To what I’ll do if —”

She tilted her head to the side and ever-so-slightly looked up at me with more backbone than most men twice her size would have in this situation. “I’m not gonna tell anyone. Why do you think I came when he texted? It sure as fuck wasn’t because I’m begging to be raped by the likes of this piece of shit. You’re the one who fucked up my plans earlier. *Rude*, by the way.”

“What were you trying to slip him?” That was all I could manage at this point, floored that she was fully unaffected.

“Ricin.” She paused. “Which is totally undetectable, unlike the mess you’ve just made.”

She leaned forward, consequently pressing the blade into the creamy expanse of the base of her throat until a small amount of blood dripped down the front of her chest. My brain lagged at the glorious sight of it. Unable to stop myself, I loosened my hold just enough that I could run my thumb along her collarbone, painting her skin my favorite color.

Until I realized what she was doing.

She kicked at Alexander’s booted foot, lifting the hem of his pant leg with the toe of her shoe as best as she could given her current predicament.

She pointed to where the material had inched up his calf to the thick black band around his ankle.

The small box attached.

The blinking lights indicating the battery level.

A fucking ankle monitor.

I released her with a heavy exhale.

How had I missed this? I'd looked into this man's records for weeks and nothing indicated that he'd been in any kind of trouble recently enough to still be on probation.

"Fuck. Fuck, fuck, *FUCK*."

"Fuck is right," she said simply.

She pried the knife from my hand, closed it, and clipped it back to my belt.

"Has no one ever told you that it's bad luck to close a knife someone else has opened?" I questioned, dumbfounded by her audacity.

"I'd say you're pretty fucking lucky that I'm even here right now at all. You'd have waltzed right out the door with a dead body to dispose of, utterly ignorant to the fact that it had an ankle monitor attached… a fucking direct line to the cops. And you'd likely not have even realized until it was too late." She turned away from me and kicked the absolute shit out of Alex's limp form.

Then, facing me again she scrunched up that cute fucking nose. "I would have to say that suicide is probably believable for someone living Alex's preferred lifestyle. No body disposal needed." She shrugged.

If I thought my cock was hard for her this morning, it was nothing compared to now.

"You're unusually calm about this," I noted.

"He was literally going to *rape* me. He bragged about it to anyone who would listen," she paused, giving me a moment to take that bit of information in. I already knew, but she didn't know that. "He's raped others. This information is publicly available online. You think I don't check out who lives in my neighborhood? I share a wall with this alcoholic moron and worked with him every day until his parents fired me this afternoon for feeding that particular habit. He didn't deserve to breathe the same air as either of us. Or any air at all for that matter."

Couldn't argue with her there.

"Tate…"

"Ew. Don't call me that." She was blatantly more offended by my use of her name than she'd been by walking in on me with a freshly dead body lying at my feet.

"Is that not your name?"

“Not to anyone who’s more than an acquaintance,” she gave me a once over that threatened my already quickly deteriorating composure. “I’d say we’re more than thoroughly acquainted. It’s TK.”

I was at a loss.

She’d seen me.

The real me that I’d been forced to hide away from anyone outside my inner circle for most of my life. *Me*.

Not only did she not look away in disgust, but she also accepted what she saw in a way that not even Ijah had done.

Indifferent. *Unafraid*.

If blood was what helped me wind up tight the unending string of chaos that was my mind, she would be what completely unraveled it all.

This felt dangerous.

“Faking suicide in this scenario would be pretty difficult. I strangled the fuck out of him.” I couldn’t help but smirk a little at the thought. “Just give me a minute to think,” I paused. “Actually? You should probably leave.”

“Yeah, okay. I’ll get right on that,” she said sarcastically.

I sucked in a deep breath. For some reason, I couldn’t seem to find it in me to tell her no. She’d wanted this, and I’d been there.

Bloodthirsty, with no way to quench it.

“He was a sick fuck, huh?” I mused.

“Understatement.”

“I saw this thing once. A guy who got off on being choked. Autoerotic asphyxiation, or something. Fucking killed himself while doing a little *self-care*.” Her eyes bulged at my words.

“That’s disgusting. I mean… I am in no way kink-shaming, but if you are insinuating what I think you are…” she gagged.

“I mean. You can still leave,” I leveled.

She crossed her arms defiantly and pouted up at me.

I audibly sighed. “Sit, then. Don’t move. And *don’t* touch anything.”

When she didn’t argue, the tightness that had formed in my throat eased a fraction. She lowered herself to a seated position on the floor and clasped her hands together in her lap.

I bent over and hoisted Alexander’s dead weight over my shoulder. He was quite a bit smaller than my 6’2 frame, but staying in shape came in handy after all, I guessed.

I lugged him up the stairs, taking the steps two at a time and hoping like hell that I'd find everything I needed to make this work.

"Is there a laptop up there?" TK shouted from the lower level. "If there's a laptop, you need to find some super gross porn! You know… something he would like!"

I shoved his body into a seated position on the floor of his tiny closet, then shuffled things around on the shelf above his hanging clothes until I found what I was looking for.

A belt would work well enough if I angled the edge into the indention I'd already made. I wrapped it tightly around his throat and secured the buckle. I heaved him up just enough that I was able to secure the loose end around the closet rod with the assistance of another belt. This was probably a two-person job, but I made it work. I would die before asking TK to bear witness to what I was about to do.

I released his weight, fearing the rod wouldn't hold.

It held… for the time being.

It wouldn't matter if it collapsed later, I just needed to set the scene. If gravity decided to do its thing once I was gone, the effect would be the same.

He dangled a few inches from the floor, still in a semi-seated position.

"Oh my god!" TK yelled up at me. "Do you have to touch his dick?! You do, don't you?! That is so disgusting! I bet he has a grubby little chode!"

Ignoring her, I yanked his pants and boxers down to his mid-thigh.

I cringed at the sight. She wasn't wrong.

"I hope he's a grower," I murmured, scanning the room for a laptop.

Grabbing it from his bedside table, I opened it. The main screen lit up, indicating that I would need a password. Thankfully, this one also accepted the owner's fingerprint to log in and I knew just where to find that.

"Did you find a computer?" This girl. She was infuriating on so many levels. "Search, 'human decanter'... I saw a video about it on TikTok and I just *know* there's weird porn for that!"

What the fuck was that? Not something I would be googling later, that's for sure. Luckily, I didn't have to search for anything because Alexander had his own fucked up porn already pulled up on the screen from whenever he'd used it last.

Trying not to vomit, I placed it on the floor in front of him and hit play.

I wiped the scene clean — as if I'd never been there — and closed the door on Alexander with his dick in his hand.

TK popped to her feet once I entered the room again. I had to stifle her excitement. "The cops *will* come for him," I told her seriously. "They *will* likely suspect foul play, or investigate in the least. You will *not* panic. I will take care of it. Whatever happens. You'll leave here tonight and move on with your life as if none of this ever happened. As if we never met."

She nodded slowly.

I'll admit I didn't want that, but I had to keep us both safe in the aftermath of whatever this was. Maybe I was an idiot for choosing to do so for countless reasons, but it was for the best. I'd covered my tracks enough times and in so many different scenarios that I felt certain it would be fine.

"I mean it, TK. What happened here was no small sin. If it eats at you, you're going to have to shove that shit down. You may have not followed through with your own plans to end his life, but you still managed to throw yourself off the deep end in deciding to show up here tonight."

Though I wasn't sure what would have happened to me if she hadn't.

"I get it," she replied. "Thank you. Seriously. The world is a better place. There are women out there who will sleep easier at night now. Including me. Fewer women will have to live their lives afraid. They'll hear he's gone and breathe a sigh of relief, and it will be because of you. And that is *everything* to some of us."

I wasn't sure what to say to that, so I simply said goodbye… to the only person who'd ever really looked at me and *seen*.

As we parted ways, I couldn't help but feel like she'd taken a small piece of me with her. I wondered if she felt the same.

CHAPTER THREE

TK

I’d promised to pretend none of this ever happened. And I would… as far as going to the cops went.

But pretending I’d never even met him at all?

No.

Fuck that.

I couldn’t let go of what he’d done for me. Whether he’d meant to or not, Beck had done something I wasn’t sure I was capable of doing on my own, despite my best intentions.

I don’t know his reasons for seeking out Alexander, but I want to believe it had something to do with what kind of human he was and the kinds of things he did to women.

The kinds of things he would’ve done to me if given the opportunity.

Beck was right to trust me with this, for whatever reason he chose to do so.

The fact that he did felt immense.

And I would honor that decision as such.

What he didn’t know was that I always snapped a picture of the license plates of strange cars near my home. My neighborhood was sketchy as fuck and I was paranoid like that. This was one instance in which I considered myself a smart bitch for that little tendency of mine, or at least a lucky one because I wasn’t about to let this man slip through my fingers when he’d just shown up for me in such a huge way.

I don’t know what his original guiding principles were when it came to Alex, but I do know that he could have reacted to my presence in a number of ways.

He didn’t question why I’d reacted so viscerally and chaotically to the things I knew about Alex and his intentions toward me.

He chose me.

Finding someone’s name and home address once you had their license plate number really wasn’t that difficult. The internet was full of all kinds of fun resources if you knew where to look.

It took no time at all for me to track down where he stayed in his downtime, which seemed to be in an apartment just above his place of employment.

I was certain it was a front for whatever other business they attended behind closed doors given Beck Wolffbrandt’s chosen extracurricular activities, but since I’d just lost my job and needed work, I considered it a golden opportunity.

The possibility of working here would mean a greater chance of running into him again. It would be all too easy to make it seem like an utter coincidence.

I could even pretend at first, around others anyway, that I didn’t recognize him. Maybe this would solidify to him that I had no intention of outing our ties to one another — maybe he’d also be convinced that I hadn’t sought him out at all.

That our paths had just conveniently crossed again.

That maybe we were fated.

I liked taking fate into my own hands.

Admittedly, in a way, I guess I felt concerned for him. It couldn’t be easy to just kill someone like that and feel good about it after. I was prepared to do the same, but I knew it would likely affect me in some kind of way.

And he literally had to touch the man’s actual dick, which was kind of gross.

In addition to that, there’s no way Alexander was just a one-time thing. It wasn’t so random that there hadn’t been any premeditation behind it at all, because we both know he was at the golf course that morning for a reason that went beyond just playing golf.

There was a baser need being met here. Any real true crime junkie could tell you that much.

But that was fine.

I didn’t want to fix him.

I just wanted to be his outlet, and I think I'd already proven that I was up for the task.

He obviously needed someone if he was so willing to let me stick around.

That someone could be me.

I could be there for him without judgment. I was thankful for what he'd done for me and I wanted to show him that thanks.

But first I would need to charm myself into a new place of employment.

L'Ultima Cena was an upscale restaurant and winery in downtown Fate Trace. I doubt that anyone would have considered it unremarkable. While the food was traditional in the Italian sense, the atmosphere was anything but that. L'Ultima Cena was well known for hosting insane parties, both public and private. It was the place to be in Fate Trace, and it was no secret that the staff aimed to please. Discreetly of course.

But not so discreetly that the more lascivious Fate Trace residents didn't know where to go for a good time.

I had always been suspicious. I was more than certain now that the place was being used to disguise the true source of the owner's money, but I couldn't give a fuck less.

I was greeted at the front by a pretty, well-dressed blonde, who gave my skin-tight, black scoop neck sweater and tan, plaid print belted mini skirt an approving once over. It was likely not acceptable attire for most interviews, but I was under no assumption that this was just a normal interview and I needed this job.

"I'm TK," I smiled. "I have an interview with Mr. Canmore."

"I'm Andi. You're a little early, but he's expecting you." A mischievous grin tugged at her lips.

Her red-bottomed heels clicked across the textured quarry tile as she strode toward the back offices without bothering to gesture for me to follow. I wondered how someone working as a waitress could afford eight hundred dollar shoes. I hurried to catch up and pulled myself to a halt in order to avoid slamming into her back as she stopped abruptly outside an unobtrusive black metal door.

She knocked twice and pushed it open. "Mr. Canmore, your intervie…"

"Fuck, Andrea!" He bellowed.

She pulled the door closed just as quickly and she'd opened it and leaped backward, but not quickly enough that I didn't get an eyeful of my potential new boss with his pants around his ankles, balls deep in a fucking stunning redhead who was bent over the front of his desk.

I gasped, eyes wide.

"It's okay," she snickered. "They like being caught."

"Is that his wife?" I asked, arching an eyebrow.

"Nope," she answered, popping the P. "She's sure someone's though," she muttered under her breath.

Andi was apparently a messy bitch. *I liked her already*.

"Anyway. You can wait here. I have to get back to the front." With a smirk on her face, she put her hand directly under her chin and waggled her fingers as if to wave goodbye before flouncing back toward the front of the restaurant.

I'd never felt more awkward in my life than I did standing there waiting for Mr. Canmore to… ah… finish. Unfortunately for me, he seemed to be in no hurry whatsoever.

I spent the next several minutes nervously shifting my weight from foot to foot, fidgeting with the hem of my skirt, and looking anywhere but at the door in front of me, when finally it opened.

Mr. Canmore gestured for me to enter and I peeked timidly around the doorframe.

"It's fine. My guest left through the back. Sorry about that. Andrea can be very thoughtless at times," he said, almost nonchalantly.

I didn't want to break it to him that I thought perhaps Andi had put a lot more thought into her actions than he gave her credit for. "It's fine. I understand. These things happen," I said, stepping through the doorway. I thought to shake his hand, then realized what he'd been doing with his hands just a few moments before and grimaced, quickly changing my mind.

"Have a seat and we'll get started. I'll try not to keep you long." He pulled a chair out from a small conference table and then took his own seat in the one directly across from me. "The first and most important question is this. Are you certified as a sommelier?"

Suddenly more nervous than I'd been before, I took a deep breath to steady myself. "I completed a course at a previous employer, but I am not certified. However, I do have extensive training and I am willing to take whatever courses you'd consider appropriate, whether in person or online, in order to meet the requirements for this job. I feel as if I can meet expectations and I have a strong desire to learn."

He seemed to study me. “I see. Would you consider your previous place of employment to be a high-volume restaurant?”

“Perhaps not as high-volume as I know L’Ultima Cena to be, but it was a busy environment nonetheless and I thrive under pressure,” I responded more confidently this time.

“Very well. We are short-staffed and you seem to have more experience than anyone else I’ve spoken with this week. I’d like to hire you on a trial basis. You’ll work closely with Andrea for two weeks. She’ll train you and she’ll also let me know how you’re doing. I’d like to meet with you at the end of each week to hear from you as well. Does that work for you?”

“Works perfectly,” I grinned. “Thank you so much for the opportunity, Mr. Canmore.”

“Call me Ijah. During your time here, please let me know if there’s anything I can do to make your job easier. If nothing else, Mr. Gallo ensures that all of his employees are well taken care of. We’re like family here.”

“Mr. Gallo?” I questioned.

“Mattia Gallo. He owns LC and is my boss. Our boss. It’s unlikely that you’ll ever see him around, but he signs the checks,” he winked. “Let’s get you set up to come back in the morning to fill out all your paperwork.” He stood.

“Sounds great, Mr. Canm... Ijah. Fuck. I haven’t even introduced myself. Tate Kenneson. I prefer TK.” I smiled up at him. He was charming. Dark hair. Broad shoulders. Square jaw. I could see the appeal.

My smile faltered and I sucked in a breath, realizing I’d just casually said fuck during my job interview. As I stood, the back entrance cracked open and heavy footsteps thudded down the back hall.

He chuckled. “TK. I think you can get by with saying fuck being that you saw my bare ass before you really even had a good look at my face.”

“To be fair, I saw a lot more than your ass,” I quipped. We both chuckled and I was certain I’d be happier here than I’d been at the golf course. Ijah seemed easy enough to get along with.

The footsteps came to a halt and I whirled around at the intrusion. I thought I’d need to act surprised upon seeing Beck again, but the utter shock I felt was totally real — and mirrored his own.

His dark hazel eyes skittered over what felt like every square inch of my body.

“What the fuck is she doing here?” He turned to Ijah, disbelief etched on his face.

Ijah turned to me. “You know Beck?”

I schooled my features to what I hoped would appear unaffected, maybe a little confused. “I don’t think so,” I squinted, scrunching my brows.

He turned back to Beck. “Beck? How do you know TK?”

“I… uh… thought she was someone else. I guess,” he said awkwardly. “I need to talk to you when you’re finished with your meeting… Meeting? Wait. Why did she see your ass? Is this a date?” He shuffled his fingers roughly through the fringe of his hair.

Was he bothered by that?

“No, it’s not a fucking date. It’s a job interview. And she saw my ass because Andrea doesn’t know how to wait for someone to answer after she knocks before slinging the goddamn door open.”

“Oh,” he replied. “A job interview? For what?”

I was certain my eyes were the size of dinner plates at this point. I looked at him pointedly over Ijah’s shoulder, urging him to please just shut the fuck up.

I cleared my throat. “Will I be working with Beck, Ijah? Should you introduce us?”

“Oh. Ah, yeah. I suppose so. Beck is… an office manager. Of sorts. We have a lot of behind-the-scenes business that needs to be attended to and he helps me with those types of things. Nothing you’ll ever need to worry about, of course.” He seemed a tad uncomfortable and I would for sure be using that to my advantage.

“Cool. I’m TK,” I said cheerily, reaching out to shake Beck’s hand. “Nice meeting you. I’ll be starting… tomorrow?” I turned to Ijah.

“Yes. Tomorrow,” He smiled politely, nodding once.

I turned back to Beck. “I’m sure I’ll see you around.”

He gave me an awkward smile that seemed to be more of a grimace and walked over to leave the way I’d entered. “I’ll come back once you finish up then.”

“Just a few more minutes,” Ijah assured him before the door clicked softly shut.

As soon as it did, I rounded on him.

“So,” I pulled out my cell phone. “I suppose I’ll need your number in case anything comes up. And you’ll need mine, of course.” I handed it to him. “If you’ll just add your contact info, I’ll text you my number.”

Hesitantly, he slipped it from my hand and eyed me suspiciously as his fingers ran over the screen. “I suppose.”

“And… if something comes up and I’m not able to reach you, I suppose I’ll need Blondie’s as well,” I jerked my thumb toward the door Beck had just exited through. “Won’t I?”

“I am not so sure you’d ever…” He started.

“You said yourself we’re like a family here, no?”

“What I meant was…”

“Did that not include Beck?”

“*Fine*.” His fingers danced across the screen for a few moments longer before he handed my phone back to me.

“Thank you, Ijah. See you in the morning!” I smiled brightly, waving as I all but skipped out the door.

I didn’t see Beck as I was leaving, but I was certain it wouldn’t be long before our paths crossed again.

I would make sure of it.

CHAPTER FOUR

Beck

I left Ijah’s office determined to shake off the shock of walking in to find her there.

Part of me was ecstatic at the sheer fortuitousness of having her wind up on my doorstep so soon.

I glanced out the window. The sky had darkened slightly with the threat of freezing rain. I’d never had any kind of faith in a higher power, but I would be lying if I said it didn’t cross my mind that perhaps something out there had had a hand in bringing her back to me.

It would have been better for both of us had she stayed far the fuck away.

Safer.

I couldn’t think of a single time in recent memory that I’d made a life choice for my own safety’s sake.

Yet something about her tugged at a part of me; a part that I wasn't sure had survived, a part left in the wake of the torpid destruction of my humanity.

Because of that, her safety mattered.

At that thought, I wasn’t so sure there was anything lucky about this at all, but there was nothing I could do to change it—short of fucking her over — because I knew she actually did need this job.

I would wait.

See how things played out.

Maybe get a bit of a buzz from her presence in the meantime.

That feeling was rare for me outside of forcing the last breath from a person’s lungs.

I was a fiend for it.

And I was selfish.

I rounded the corner nearing the front of the house. I rarely made my presence known at LC, but I had a feeling that would soon change. Law and Alec were less inclined to make themselves scarce — also less inclined to avoid not being found lounging at the bar midmorning on a day like today.

The shitty weather and the lack of work as of late were likely just the right mix that I'd find those two assholes cozied up exactly where I expected them to be.

To anyone else, they'd look like your average guys; two friends having brunch.

Just as Fate Trace is seemingly your average small town to an outsider looking in.

But there is a danger that skitters along the edges of each of the neighborhoods that make up Fate Trace, a filthy allure that sings its siren song to the depraved parts of people who live here.

Law, Alec, and I are who they face when the undertow pulls them down to the bottom — the scavengers who find their own ecstasy in the form of a dismembered corpse — in watching the bones sink to the ocean floor.

With the bar seemingly empty, I pulled out my phone to text one of the two. As I turned toward the back exit, I collided with a tiny blonde chatty form.

Fuck me, no thank you.

"Beck! Excuse you."

"Yeah. Excuse me." I shoved her roughly to the side in an attempt to dissuade her from any further interaction, but Andrea was not one to be easily ignored.

Actually, she downright refused to remain unseen by anyone, which, unfortunately, included me.

"What are you doing here so early in the day?" Her shrill voice grated on every single one of my frayed nerve endings.

"None of your fucking business," I continued walking.

"You're so funny. Well. I guess I'll see you later then. I have a new employee to train this week. She's so cute. I'm really looking forward to getting to know her."

My steps faltered and I looked back at her. She blinked up at me almost as if there was really a single coherent thought behind those dopey eyes of hers — almost as if she knew I cared.

Did I?

“Looking forward to getting to know her *how*?”

She shrugged one shoulder. “As coworkers, duh. Friends,” she hesitated before throwing in at the end, “we’ll see what else.”

The number of times and ways I’d imagined ending this squeaky little noisemaker was countless.

Many people lack self-awareness, but not to the extent that Andrea does.

To the extent that she thinks she’s chummy with a man who’d rather slit her throat simply to watch her bleed out rather than endure hearing the next word fall from her overfilled lips.

“And you mean what exactly by ‘what else’?” My already mounting annoyance spiked immensely at the thought of Andrea pursuing TK in any way outside of showing her how to do her job here and moving the fuck on.

“She’s fucking hot. Have you seen her?”

“You’re straight? You’ve slept with every single man on the payroll here.”

“First of all, I’m bi. Second of all, no I haven’t. I haven’t slept with you. Or Ijah.”

“That’s two people.”

She rolled her eyes.

I stepped toward her, considering how I might stab her in the neck with the ballpoint ink pen peeking out of the top of her breast pocket. The thought made my fingers twitch, but I tamped down the urge.

Before I could say what I intended on saying, she opened her mouth again.

And what came out confirmed everything I’d ever thought or felt about this exceedingly irritating girl.

“You have seen her, haven’t you? I know how we could remedy both our problems. Two birds with one stone or some shit,” She paused and batted her fake eyelashes up at me. “We could totally share her.”

The only problem I would be remedying would be Andrea or anyone else thinking that I would ever share anything that belonged to me.

I grabbed her wrist and yanked her into me roughly, close enough to scare her but not so close that our bodies would have any actual contact. “Yeah. I’ve seen her. More importantly, she’s seen me. And if you so much as even think of her as anything aside from a person you are working alongside, I'll fucking rip your spine out your throat."

I thrust her away from me, hoping that was that, but of course, it wasn't because this was Andrea and Andrea didn't know the definition of a fucking boundary.

She stumbled and quickly righted herself before drawling, "*Kinky*."

I ran my hand over my face, steeling myself because, for some obscure reason, Ijah was adamant that she had to stay — both in the land of the living and employed by LC.

I was pretty certain she knew this too, or else she wouldn't constantly push my buttons. She was an idiot sandwich, yeah. But she wasn't stupid enough to be completely oblivious as to what goes on behind closed LC doors.

"I'm not even remotely fucking kidding, Andrea."

"Beck. Do you have a crush on the new girl?" I eyed the ink pen again. It was a BIC. Cheap. I wasn't sure if the flimsy plastic would hold up against an attempt at perforating neck flesh, but I was willing to find out.

"I don't get crushes." I really didn't, but I wasn't so sure that was still true at this point. Was someone like me even capable of that?

Regardless, I felt something for TK.

And I wasn't about to let the likes of this little girl get in the way of it.

"You do have a crush. This is so exciting." She clapped her hands together like a fucking toddler.

"There's nothing exciting. I don't have a crush. What is wrong with your head?"

"That's something someone with a crush would say." She shimmied her shoulders. "Oh, my god. I'm going to make her my bestie and I'm totally going to hook you two up."

I'd always relied on Samael to take care of disposing of all the bodies I'd accumulated over the years. Every single one.

Right now, I wondered how satisfying it might be to watch Andrea's cold, dead corpse melt into goo inside a vat of lye.

I would have to look into that.

"You're absolutely not going to fucking do tha—"

It was useless. I couldn't even finish my sentence before she bounced away.

I really, really hoped that when the next day came, TK would spend her time working with and getting to know Andrea and that she would simply find her as absolutely fucking agitating as I did.

CHAPTER FIVE

TK

I fucking loved Andi.

How had I stayed at my last miserable job for so long when this place existed? I'd been just chugging along at the golf course, happy to make a paycheck, but it was never truly enjoyable. Even with Skeevy Alex out of the picture, I doubted that I would've found my days at the golf course to be any better than usual.

Skeevy men come in all forms, especially when you're a pretty face whose job it is to cater to a multitude of them.

I was sure I'd probably see my fair share at L'Ultima Cena once I really had the opportunity to get my feet wet. But I also had a gut feeling that there were at least a few people here who'd have my back when the time came, unlike at the course.

Andi happened to be one of them.

"The best part of this job is probably how easy it is to get a fat tip from the slimy old bastards who make it a habit of coming here. Bat your pretty eyelashes a few times and they're like putty in your hands," she informed me, simultaneously showing me the proper way to arrange a table setting.

I picked up a rolled set of silverware and mirrored her actions on the opposite side of a large group table. "It was pretty much the same at the golf course, but I had to be careful, honestly. A lot of the rich assholes around here think that a kind word thrown in their direction equates to 'fuck me, daddy' and I cannot with that shit."

She circled the table and looped her arm through mine to lead me away to the next one and said, "I don't think that's anything you'll have to worry about here."

“Why’s that?” I eyed her suspiciously.

“Well, for one because there’s no way in hell I’d let anyone here take advantage of you...” I grinned at her response before she added, “…and for two because I’m pretty sure Beck would skin anyone alive who even thought about looking at you sideways.”

I gaped at her, speechless. How had she made the connection that we even knew one another at all?

She tipped my mouth closed with two fingers under my chin. “I mentioned training a new employee to him yesterday and he was totally flustered about it. He definitely has a little crush.”

“You have lost your whole entire mind, Andi.”

“Have I?” She shimmied.

“Yeah,” I leveled her with a flat stare. “You have.”

The smug look she was giving me turned feral when her eyes caught on something — or someone — just over my left shoulder. I tensed at the awkwardness I just knew this girl was capable of creating for me if that someone happened to be Beck.

“Alec!” She beamed. “Fancy seeing you here.”

I braved a glance in the guy’s direction, confident at that point that I wasn’t about to be blindsided by my entire reason for being here in the first place.

Turns out Beck wasn’t the only person who could blindside me because this guy was hot.

His dark skin was covered in tattoos, from his neck to his fingertips, and I could only assume everywhere in between. His hair was shaved on the sides, but thick, dark brown curls fell over his forehead and into his eyes. I was pretty sure his jawline could cut glass.

He seemed to ooze the same danger that rolled off of Beck, but when he pulled Andi into a side hug and kissed the top of her head I questioned how good of a judge of character I actually was upon first impression.

Not that anyone would ever call me a good judge of character in the first place.

“Hey, cutie girl. Who’s your friend?” He spoke with a faint accent that I didn’t fully recognize, looking me over curiously, as if something about me had piqued his interest, then pulled back from Andi to look her over in the same kind of way. “You two could pass for twins if it wasn’t for the major hair color difference.”

Andi gave me a once over herself and nodded. “I guess I can see the similarities. We’re the same size at least.”

“Yeah,” he tapped her nose with his forefinger. “Tiny.”

“Says you. What are you 6’4” or something? Not many people would seem anything but tiny to someone your size,” I teased.

“I guess that’s true, but you’re still a little nugget,” he grinned.

I rolled my eyes. He wasn’t wrong.

“TK, this is Alec. He works closely with Beck.” She waggled her eyebrows. “Management stuff. I’m sure you two will see one another around. But for now, we’ve gotta get back to work.”

“Nice to meet you, TK. If you ever need anything, Andi has my number.” He winked, walking away.

I turned to face her. It was my turn to waggle my own eyebrows.

“Oh, shush,” she said before I could get a word in edgewise. “Don’t get me wrong, he’s fucking hot. But he’s just a friendly coworker at most. He’s totally hung up on someone. I haven’t been able to get out of him who, but he says she’s unavailable and he’s a literal sad boy about it so I feel obligated to try and keep it in my pants with that one.”

“Have you considered telling him that she’d probably make herself very available if she knew someone who looked like that was even considering sparing her a second glance?”

“I have. He just says that some people are off limits regardless. I try not to meddle.” She shrugged.

“*You* try not to meddle?” I asked incredulously.

She slapped me playfully on the arm. “Some things you just have to leave alone around here. But anywho, Alec is a good person in upper management to be able to get ahold of if you need help with anything serious. I can send you his number, he won’t mind.”

“Uhm. You don’t have to do that. Ijah gave me some numbers for other upper management after my interview.”

“He what? Whose?” She seemed genuinely shocked by this, and I couldn't help but blush.

“Well. I kind of weaseled it out of him but... his.” I paused. “And Beck’s,” I said quickly.

“Wait a fucking minute. You convinced Ijah to give you Beck’s number?” She giggled uncontrollably. “Oh, this is too good. We are texting him. Like right now.”

"No way! It's for emergencies!"

"Emergencies my ass. Give me your phone." She held her hand out and waited expectantly.

"I'm not giving you my phone. We're not texting him."

"Fine. Party pooper. I need a quick bathroom break and then we can go to the front and I'll go ahead and train you on the cash register a bit since we're finished back here for now."

I was a bit surprised that she'd let it go so easily.

I shouldn't have been, because when I walked around her she quickly snatched my phone from the front pocket of my apron and ran to lock herself in the bathroom.

I banged on the door. "Andi, I swear to fuck! Let me in!"

"Oh my god, TK. I'm trying to use the bathroom. Calm down."

I was going to kill her, and when I did there would be nothing left for anyone to find. She'd be wiped from existence without a single trace.

I went to bang on the door again, but it swung open before I had the chance.

Andi strolled out as if nothing had happened and casually dropped my phone back into the front pocket of my apron.

I groaned. "I'm afraid to even look. God, you're such a bitch."

I locked myself in the bathroom and fell back onto the door, sliding into a seated position on the floor. Probably not the most sanitary choice of the day, but LC seemed to be cleaner than any other restaurant I'd been to and I was feeling genuinely ill about opening this text thread.

What the fuck was she thinking?

She wasn't, of course, because she likely had no idea just how dangerous of a man Beck was. Whatever shady business people who worked here thought went on behind the scenes was probably nothing compared to what I knew.

Not that I was intimidated by him at all. More enthralled than anything.

I took a deep breath and swiped up on the screen. I was definitely putting a passcode on my phone after this. I clicked on my messages and scrubbed a hand over my face at what I saw.

TK

First day at the new job! Can’t seem to stay focused on learning much for having some particularly x-rated thoughts revolving mostly around you. Btw… guess what I’m not wearing?

Oh, my fuck.

It was too late to unsend it. Apparently, Beck was a fan of read receipts.

Fuck Andi and fuck this day.

Just as I started to try and think of anything to say to save myself, those cursed three little dots popped up at the bottom of the screen, indicating that he was typing a response.

I squeezed my eyes shut and banged the back of my head against the bathroom door three times in quick succession, lightly but in reality, I wanted to smash through it and strangle her.

My phone vibrated.

BECK

How did you get this number?

I chewed my bottom lip.

TK

Non parlo inglese.

Smooth.

BECK

Era un testo piuttosto impertinente. Penso che qualcuna debba essere punito.

He’s bilingual. Great. I’m totally not, but whatever.

I pasted the text into google translate. My mouth basically hit the floor.

That was a pretty naughty text. I think someone needs to be punished.

Let’s circle back. I fucking loved Andi.

CHAPTER SIX

Beck

It wasn’t often that Ijah and I set up a kill together. Ever at all, really. These days his job was more behind the scenes pulling the strings than anything else. Mattia’s need for absolute control meant he liked to keep us all on a tight leash, but none of us more than Ijah. He left the hands-on work to the guys and me... and I typically took care of my own marks without assistance.

Tonight he insisted.

He’d claimed that this one was too dangerous for one person to take on alone. I’d been insulted that he thought I couldn’t handle pretty much anything thrown my way at this point.

I’d been taught by the best, after all.

Maybe if he’d sent Alec or Law they’d have needed to go together. *Big dumb fucks*. But I was perfectly capable and I’d said as much when given the details.

This particular mark owed Mattia money. Lots of it, apparently. Nothing new there.

Upon entering the man’s crusty living area, I wondered what he’d done with all that he’d borrowed because he certainly hadn’t thought to spend a single dime of it on cleaning supplies.

Seeing him sprawled on the couch borderline unconscious from whatever he’d just snorted off the end table, it didn’t take much to figure it out.

I glared at Ijah. “So dangerous.”

He shrugged. “How else was I supposed to convince you to let me come along? Not like you’re into family bonding time.”

I lumbered across the space and yanked the man up by his head, quickly snapping it to just the right angle.

The muffled grinding of bones sliding past one another into places they ought not to be sent a shiver down my spine.

"*Family bonding?*" I released his head, causing it to thunk against the arm of the couch.

"We're all we've got, Beck. Mattia keeps me cooped up in that stupid fucking office 24/7. Sometimes I just need to get out. See people. Do something that feels like actual work."

"I guess. Well, you're out, so make yourself useful and lug this piece of shit out to your trunk." He chuckled a bit at that but did as I asked.

The drive to Sam's was a quick one, but not so quick that Ijah didn't have time to pepper me with questions on the way there.

"So," he said from the passenger seat. "The girl."

"Girl?" I questioned.

He sat quietly for a beat before responding, "TK."

Fuck. So this was what he considered *bonding*. Needed to get out of the office, my ass.

Just the sound of her name made my mouth go dry. "The one you interviewed last week?" I feigned ignorance.

He glowered at me, seeing right through my bullshit. "You know Andrea talks a lot.'"

"Too fucking much," I grumbled. "I'd love to shut her up. Permanently."

Ijah huffed a laugh. "I'm aware. Regardless, anything you wanna tell me?"

I glanced at him from the corner of my eye. "Yeah. Andrea is a bitch."

"Beck."

Gravel crunched beneath the tires as I pulled into the back parking lot of Messor Crematoria that, aside from Sam, only we had access to. The solid sliding security gate glided shut behind us.

Samael Messor was one paranoid motherfucker, and for that, I was grateful. He had every reason to be, given his chosen line of side work, and his paranoia kept us all safe. Not to mention, it allowed me the freedom to meet my own personal needs without very much consideration as to whether or not I would ever face any kind of repercussions.

Though the rest of us lacked the paranoia, we were all pretty anal about making sure all our bases were covered. Not to mention, it’s a little easier to get away with murder when you only kill the people no one will miss.

I backed up to the door and put the car in park. There was no concern that anyone would see, even at the times we’d had to do this in broad daylight. Sam’s massive hedges surrounding the rear entrance took care of that.

I popped the trunk. Just as Ijah and I rounded the car, the door swung open and Sam stepped out. His eyes skittered nervously over every inch of the surrounding area. “No one saw you pull in, did they?”

Ijah and I hefted the body out. Teamwork makes the dream work and all that.

“No, Sam,” Ijah answered flatly. “You’re in the middle of nowhere and you don’t see *anyone* without an appointment. It’s fucking dark out. There’s no one around for miles.”

He held the door open for us and we plodded through, shouldering the body onto a waiting gurney before it clicked shut behind us.

“Hey, kid. I have an autopsy tomorrow if you want to stop by.” Sam was also the local coroner, and despite the fact that I hadn’t watched him perform an autopsy since I was an overly-interested 14-year-old, he still offered.

“Have to work, Sam. Maybe next time.”

Ijah spoke up. “Yeah, if by work you mean lurk around LC for half the day in hopes that you’ll run into that gorgeous little waitress I just hired.”

The thought of that possibility made me restless with anticipation.

“A girl?” Sam questioned. “Since when do you interact with other humans, Beck?”

“I don’t,” I said, looking Ijah directly in the eye.

“Might be good for you,” the old man offered. “Don’t end up like me… a hermit in your old age, and whatnot.”

I stuffed my hands into my pockets and nodded. “People like me aren’t built for companionship, Sam.”

He hmphed. “Never know ‘til you try. What’s she like?” The question was aimed at Ijah.

He thought for a moment, then decided on the one thing I knew he was sure would garner a reaction from me.

“She’s a tight piece of ass, Sammy.” He smirked. “I wouldn’t mind…”

I shoved him roughly, my face flaming. “He didn’t *ask* what she *looked* like, or what you would or wouldn’t mind doing with her.” My body vibrated. If he were anyone else I would have likely impaled him with the nearest sharp object, and there were plenty within reach.

Sam chuckled. “Haven’t seen that kind of reaction from you since you were sixteen and still setting shit on fire in the back parking lot anytime Ijah took away your stabby privileges.”

“*Stabby privileges?*” Ijah questioned, amused.

“Yeah, you know. When he got a little too trigger-happy, so to speak.” He turned to me. “If Ijah’s answer wasn’t good enough, why don’t *you* tell me what she’s like then?”

How could I answer that? Why did either of them care what I thought or felt?

Did I feel?

I wasn’t sure which emotions filled my chest at the mere thought of her, but there seemed to be a lot of them. It felt… pleasant. Terrifying.

“She’s like… the way it feels when you visit the ocean for the first time. Or…” I hesitated, considering. “Like the moment you see the light behind a person’s eyes go out, and you know it was at your hand,” The corner of my mouth lifted of its own accord.

“*Shit.*” Ijah cursed.

“*What?*” I frowned.

“Unexpected, that’s all.” Sam chortled.

“Well, you fucking *asked*.” I stomped off toward the door, swinging it open so roughly and quickly that it banged against the outside wall before swinging itself closed again.

I climbed into the driver’s seat and slammed the car door, yanking my seatbelt before clicking it into place.

What the fuck was *wrong* with me? I needed to get a grip.

Ijah opened the passenger door and settled into his own seat. I said nothing, jerked the car into drive, and peeled out of the lot.

We drove in silence for a bit before he finally offered, “It’s okay, you know. To feel this. To want her. You’re human.”

“Am I?” I quirked a brow at him.

He released a breath. “Yeah. You are.”

We spent the rest of the time not speaking. When I pulled into LC, he clapped me on the shoulder. “I have work waiting on me that I need to take care of before heading home.”

Entering through the back leading directly into his office, I found that his *work* was exactly what I’d expected. A man I vaguely recognized was unconscious and tied to the only chair in the room that was bolted to the floor.

“I’ll leave you to it,” I nodded. “I need a fucking drink.”

He started to say something else, but I was already out the door. Indulging in alcohol was rare for me, but I needed something to calm my unsettled mind before I could even consider getting any sleep tonight.

LC had been closed for hours now, and the bar out front was calling my name.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TK

I couldn’t open my left eye. The pain that radiated just behind it was too much.

A pulsing, dull ache.

We’d closed hours ago, but I was still here.

Alone, because I’d insisted to Andi that I would lock up and that I was certain I didn’t need her help at the end of the night.

Fuck me for trying to be a useful employee and a satisfactory coworker, I guess.

I’d gingerly nestled my way into a booth seat and made it my bed for the foreseeable future.

Migraines were the fucking worst, especially when they hit out of nowhere. I hated nothing more than feeling like this. I needed to be home. In bed. Definitely not here.

But this is how it was for me, so I was stuck. A subject to my own traitorous body.

Footsteps sounded somewhere nearby, but I couldn’t lift my head to find the source. I hoped that whoever it was would simply not notice me here. I didn’t have it in me to explain myself.

For a second I thought they’d continue on past, but the sound faltered a moment before they redirected and steadily came closer.

Great.

I felt him before he made his presence known, and somehow knew that it was Beck before he even spoke.

His nearness prods at my awareness like my fucking soul knows his on a baser level.

“TK?” He sounded uncertain.

I made a solid attempt at lifting my head but failed miserably.

Even with blurred and partially obstructed vision, the way his dark honey-blond hair fell over his face in the dim lighting twisted my insides.

“Hmm?” I moaned almost inaudibly.

He took a step closer. “Are you *drunk?*”

Of course, that was his first thought. I mean, I’m sure that’s how it probably looked. But damn. Give a girl the benefit of the doubt or something.

“Migraine. Just need to lie here a bit,” I managed.

He shifted, now looming over me, placing himself directly inside my personal space bubble. Under any other circumstance, I would have been thrilled with his forwardness.

But this? Less than ideal.

“You have a migraine?” He seemed caught off guard, and… concerned? “Ijah gets those too.”

“That’s what I just said. Shhh.” I mumbled, waving him off. It wasn’t that I didn’t want to see him, because *of course* I did. I just couldn’t deal currently. Hopefully, I would run into him again once I was some semblance of a functioning human being.

I’d barely settled my head back into the crook of my elbow when I was lifted over the back of the seat as if I weighed approximately nothing. He was carrying me cradled like a baby to… I had no idea where, but I couldn’t muster the strength to care at this point.

I cuddled closer to his body, and fuck, it was nice.

He carried me with a practiced ease, lithe and graceful as if he was certain of every movement before it happened.

A predator. Calculating even the most ordinary undertakings.

I should have been scared of him. Scared of what I knew he was capable of.

I wasn’t.

I ached for him.

I’d considered death a million ways in my lifetime. Intrusive thoughts are fun like that. None of those ways were as perfect as the thought of Beck being the one to end it all.

We would all die someday, and if I was about to go out now… what a fucking way to go.

My fucked-up thought process was interrupted by the sound of Beck opening a door. We stepped into a well-lit room and I winced at the brightness of it.

He ran his hand over my hair in a comforting gesture that I previously would not have thought him capable of.

The thunk of a fist meeting flesh broke the initial silence. He laid me on… something, and I forced one eye open a bit to take in what I could of my surroundings.

I was lying on the chaise lounge in Ijah's office.

Another sick smack sounded throughout the space. "Beck. The fuck? You knew what I was doing in here. If Mattia finds out that you brought an employee back here tonight, you won't live to see another day."

Something scraped across a nearby surface, then a sharp clicking sound. Two excruciatingly loud pops sounded in quick succession. "Good thing you're finished then," Beck asserted, gently chucking the firearm back to where he'd taken it from.

It thunked and skimmed across the surface and I flinched, faintly conscious of the possibility that he hadn't put the safety back into place.

In a small corner of my brain, part of me realized that I should not be okay with any of this. Any sane person would be totally freaked out.

I'd accepted that I lacked in the sanity department a long time ago. The warped parts of my mind took up more space and almost always won out. Especially now.

Especially with him.

Beck feeds the depraved parts of me all the wicked things they've never eaten before.

I was starved for more.

"Is she okay?" Ijah asked, perhaps just realizing that I was in somewhat of a bad way.

"She has a migraine. She needs medicine." There was the sound of someone rustling through a drawer. "And that black thing you put over your eyes."

A refrigerator door opened. The two exchanged words in hushed whispers, so quietly that I couldn't make out what they were saying.

Beck made his way back to my side and slipped a cold band around my head and over my eyes. I felt a small amount of relief almost instantly and sighed.

His finger gently nudged just under my bottom lip. “Open.”

I did as he asked. He slipped something under my tongue and then tipped my mouth closed again. I think I would have allowed him to do whatever he wanted with me without question or resistance.

“Good girl,” he murmured, causing heat to pool in my lower abdomen.

Even in my current state, it was hard as fuck not to react to the taste of his skin on my lips.

“Anything else?” Ijah asked, almost incredulously.

“Yeah. Neither of us will be in tomorrow.”

Before he could respond, Beck scooped me up and snuggled me against him, carrying me out of the room, down the main hall, and up a set of stairs. We went through a couple more doors before there was the distinct sound and feel of bedding rustling and being pulled back.

He placed me down on the most comfortable fucking bed and pillow that I could have ever possibly imagined and tucked me in as if I were someone cherished.

I wanted to be that to him.

I was content in this moment, abundantly aware of Beck’s dominating presence. This dangerous man who didn’t feel dangerous to me at all, touching me with a gentleness that I was certain he’d not shown many others. Taking care of me.

I didn’t understand what had caused this shift in him. Did he feel sorry for me because of how pitiful I had been, or was it something else?

I decided I didn’t care. I was thankful for it either way.

My migraine had eased marginally, but not so much that I could do anything aside from attempting to fall into a restful sleep.

It didn’t take long. Satisfied thoughts of what tomorrow had in store had me anxious for the lapse in time.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Beck

Having her in my bed was torture.

Sleep had never been something that came easy for me. Most nights I lie in bed lulled into a restless slumber sometime in the early hours of the morning by a continuous slow-motion loop of the exact moment my bullet split the skin covering my brother’s frontal bone playing in my mind.

I don’t know that I have ever felt any sort of guilt about what happened. It was almost as if some minuscule part of my mind held onto what I logically knew I should feel, but couldn’t – the unquiet nights a punishment for not doing so.

Tonight, though, I was unable to silence my mind for an entirely different reason.

I’d attempted to sleep on the couch. Lying there, the mere thought of the heat of her body in the next room felt like a blazing inferno *begging* me to walk into the flames.

To burn.

And I wanted to.

Lying motionless, I focused on the whir of the ceiling fan above me. Instead of quieting myself into a sense of mental repose, my body itched with tension at each turn of the blades.

I couldn’t fucking take it.

Jerking to a seated position, I ran my hands through my hair and tugged at the roots.

Maybe I just needed to be in my own bed. I couldn’t sleep on the couch.

I made my way to my room, the initial sight of her freezing me in place.

At some point in the night, she'd removed the cold therapy wrap I'd placed over her eyes. Her dark hair spilled over my pillow, lips parted ever-so-slightly. My breath caught in my throat.

I don't know what came over me tonight, this desire to *care* for her that I am not sure I would have been able to fight if I had even bothered to make an effort to do so. Seeing her curled up in that booth so helpless and seemingly impaired scraped at my very bones and made me want to burn the entire building to the ground around us if it meant I could take away that vulnerability.

If she had been drunk, I would have done the same. But somehow the fact that she'd been in that position not by her own choice made it worse.

I would just lie next to her. Sleep wouldn't come for me any time soon. It was too early in the night. Once in my own bed, I would at least feel more comfortable than on the couch. And I had no reason not to be there.

It was *my* bed.

I would be gone the next morning before she'd ever realized I'd been there.

I eased myself down next to her, shuffling under the thick comforter, careful not to startle her.

Being next to her relieved the tightness in my muscles a fraction.

I breathed in her vanilla scent, a long intake of breath that made my lungs ache. I felt this chemical attraction to her – some force begging me to lean into her, to pull her into me. To find a way to bind our bodies into one.

I shoved those urges someplace I hoped they'd fade away and be forgotten.

Her hand twitched toward mine and I wondered if she'd felt this pull too, even in her sleep.

That was my last thought once my head hit the pillow, before I drifted off, more quickly and easily than I could recall experiencing anytime in recent memory.

* * *

TK

I felt the moment Beck entered the room. I've always been such a light sleeper. Even the most gentle shift in the atmosphere of a room can wake me.

But Beck didn't know that.

So I'd feigned sleep, curious what he'd do. I'll admit that I was shocked when he climbed into bed with me. That shock quickly faded into a simmering warmth low in my abdomen.

It took everything in me to bite back the smile that tugged at the corners of my mouth. I'd hoped he didn't notice.

I was a little disappointed when he kept to his own side of the bed. *Such a gentleman.* He fell asleep much quicker than I'd anticipated. So quickly that I was actually kind of jealous of his capability to shut his mind off like that. So little effort.

Such a man thing. Why were they all able to do that? No thoughts, empty head. While I and women all over the world had to lie there and overthink for ourselves and everyone else for a few hours before we could finally nod off. *Rude*.

Once his breathing had remained at a heavy, steady cadence for several long minutes, I scooted a bit closer. He shifted onto his side facing me and I paused my movement. Thankfully, I hadn't woken him.

Instead, he'd just given me exactly what I'd wanted.

A golden opportunity to make myself his little spoon.

I turned to face the opposite wall and shimmied into him until my back was flush with his front. I held my breath, hoping that he wouldn't wake at the physical contact.

It seemed that Beck was no light sleeper, so I settled in a bit. Being this close to him felt like a homecoming.

I was in limbo, somewhere between awake and asleep when I felt him stiffen behind me.

I lay painfully still, my body aching with the need for him to be okay with this and my heart somewhere in my throat. I felt the warmth of his presence, a mix of dread and anticipation hanging in the air. I was terrified he'd woken up and was seconds away from rejecting this scenario between us.

I glanced tentatively up at him. His eyes were closed and his breathing steady, his body seemingly peaceful now.

And then I felt the warmth of his hands on my body.

His long fingers tentatively explored my curves. Heat radiated through my skin like a ripple of electricity. His hands were big and strong, moving gracefully and elegantly, leaving me breathless.

I wanted to feel his skin on mine.

I wanted his hands to learn me in every way.

His fingers gently traced my neck, moving down my shoulders, sending a shiver down my spine.

He gripped my chin with his thumb and forefinger, lightly turning my face to his. Our eyes locked, the most intense moment of my life.

For a millisecond, I thought he might kiss me.

And then his hands found their way to my thighs. My blood heated. I pressed my body into him, craving more of him, grinding my ass into his thickening erection.

He gripped my hips tightly, encouraging me to continue the movement.

I wanted to feel his hands on me for all of eternity. Beck never seemed to feel the same intensity or range of emotion as others did. He was always so calm… so sure. I wondered if he felt anything now – anything compared to how I felt.

"What the fuck are you doing to me?" He groaned in my ear.

I ground into him harder, needy – hoping to snap the resolve I knew he held tightly in place.

"*Fuck*," he whispered roughly, and I knew I'd won.

He suddenly pulled away from me, his body rigid – so quickly that I felt a pang of anxiety. Had I gone too far? The chill I felt from the loss of him seemed to stretch on endlessly.

"Was that not okay?" I asked.

He didn't answer.

I turned to face him as he climbed back onto the bed, placing a knee on either side of my hips. He reached down, roughly grabbing my wrists, jerking them above my head, and tying them to the headboard with… I don't even know what, or where he'd pulled the material from. Struggling against his grip, I tried to pull away.

I wanted this. *God, did I.*

But I would be lying if I said alarm bells weren’t sounding.

Beck held me tightly, his grip unwavering and his eyes full of an intensity I’d never seen before.

“What are you doing?” I asked, trembling.

“Whatever the fuck I want,” he answered, his voice low and husky.

I couldn’t hide the look of shock on my face when he yanked my pants just over my hips and shoved my shirt up, exposing the flat plane of my stomach to the cool air.

He grabbed my waist, pulling me closer.

Leaning into me, he tentatively pressed three slow, sweet kisses along my jawline before gazing into my fucking soul and roughly kissing me once on the lips.

“God, I’ve never wanted to… *fuck*,” he breathed.

He pushed to his knees and roughly freed his erection.

My mouth dried out at the sight of him, my body aching with need. “*Fuck*, let me touch you. *Please*.” I begged, pulling at my restraints.

“I can’t fucking *control* myself around you,” he gripped his thick cock, slowly working himself from base to tip.

He roved his thumb in a slow circle over the head, collecting the precum beaded there before offering it to me. I opened greedily and sucked his finger into my mouth.

I was on fire.

He straightened again, his breathing quickening as he stroked himself faster. Harder.

I felt wave after wave of arousal wash over my flushed body as I watched.

I squirmed, rubbing my thighs together for any amount of friction there. I don’t think I’d ever been so goddamn wet in my life, and he hadn’t even touched me.

“Tell me you’re mine,” he pleaded. “Say it, *cuore mio*.”

“Yours,” I panted.

And I truly fucking was.

With one final tug of his hand, his body shuddered as he found his own pleasure, his hot cum washing over my stomach in thick spurts. I quivered as he released a satisfied sigh, collapsing over me.

I wanted to live in this moment for the rest of my days — rip my own fucking heart out and hand it to him on a silver platter.

He’d probably like that.

I lay there, my body still trembling. I felt a mixture of relief and confusion as he untied my hands, and then, with the same intensity in his eyes as before, he pulled me into him, holding me so fucking tightly.

As if he didn’t want to let go.

Couldn’t.

I soaked up the moment, wishing it could go on forever.

CHAPTER NINE

TK

We approached the door to my townhouse, and I felt like I was living in an alternate reality.

How was *he* here with *me*? Fucking surreal.

"I'll be quick. I know I don't have to be at work for a few more hours, but I don't want to be a burden. I'm assuming you have more important things to do." I wasn't sure why he'd insisted on driving me. My car was still at LC, and my migraine had been long gone for hours.

"I don't," he said, using my key to unlock the front door.

Once inside, I took a stab at making casual conversation. "So. What do you typically do with the bodies of people you kill?"

Yeah. *So casual, TK.*

He looked at me flatly, "Who says there are other bodies?"

I glared at him as if to say, *come on*.

He stepped into my kitchen and leaned back against the counter. "I could never implicate the person who I have always relied on to take care of those types of things for me."

"Then don't. But I still wanna know like… *how* you get rid of them." The police procedural drama junkie in me was so curious.

He seemed to think about it for a moment before replying. "Cremation."

My brows lifted. "Wow. Impressive. That's some super-advanced level fuckery."

A smirk tugged at the corner of his lips and I wondered if he ever actually laughed. I hummed thoughtfully before turning to the fridge to pull out a drink.

He rustled something across the countertop. "What's this?"

I couldn’t remember having left anything out. “Oh. That,” I said when I saw what he had in his hand. “It’s a semi-permanent tattoo. I ordered it online a few weeks ago. I’ve always wanted a sleeve tattoo, but kind of wanted to see what it would look like first before fully committing. You put them on and they last for like one to two weeks or something. I haven’t done it yet because I couldn’t really figure out how to put it on myself with one hand without fucking it up. And it’s pretty big so I didn’t want it to look stupid for two full weeks and not be able to do anything about it.”

“I could put it on for you,” he offered, looking over the instructions. “You’d still have time to get ready for work and pack an overnight bag.”

I paused, the can of sparkling water halfway to my mouth. “Overnight bag?” I raised my eyebrows at him.

He looked a little shy at that but shrugged. “Just something to keep at my place. Last night wasn’t a one-time thing.”

A smug smile crept over my face. “You planning on tying me up again sometime soon?” The thoughts of him ejac… Oh my god.

E-*jack*-you-late. That’s why it was called *jacking* off. How had I gone twenty-one years of my life without making this connection?

Jacking off. Heh.

“No,” his coarse voice snapped me from my ridiculous thoughts. “The next time I have you in my bed I fully intend on having your hands on me. I want you to show me everything you like.”

Excuse me while I melt into the floor.

I didn’t totally know what to say to that, but I couldn’t think on it for too long because he pulled a chair out from my kitchen table and patted the seat, gesturing for me to sit down, so I did.

“Take off your shirt.”

I jerked my head to look up at him, lust apparently evident on my face.

“The *tattoo,* cuore mio.”

I wondered what that meant, what he was calling me. Part of me wanted to ask but the other part was just content with the pet name.

Hopefully, it didn’t mean like, “Dumb Bitch” or something.

“How do you know Italian, anyway?” I asked.

“I’ve been with Ijah for ten years, which means I’ve been with Mattia for just as long and he speaks only Italian about fifty percent of the time. I guess I just picked up on it over the years. Kids’ brains are like sponges or some shit.”

Wow, Ijah must really be like family to him, then.

I slid my shirt over my head and dropped it onto the floor. His eyes darkened as he took me in. “Hands to yourself, lover boy. We’re on a tight schedule now that we’ve decided to tat me up today.”

He placed a chair next to me and grabbed the corner of my own, pulling me into him.

God, I hoped he wouldn’t actually not touch me. I was a bit of a needy mess after last night and every move he made lit my nerve endings on fire.

He removed the priming wipe from the package and tore it open with his teeth before taking it out and rubbing it over the length of my arm. A totally nonsexual gesture, but my pussy didn’t get the memo.

Once it dried, he took out the sections of the tattoo and got to work.

He peeled the backing off the first piece before sticking it down, then worked in silence, giving his full attention to making sure each one was angled correctly and evenly spaced before pressing it firmly onto my skin.

“They need to stick for a bit before I peel them off,” he ran his hand over my arm one final time. I suspected it had nothing to do with the sticky pieces of film he’d just placed all over it. “You can get ready for work while we wait. Like, do everything aside from getting dressed, then I’ll peel them off once you’re ready to do that.”

I trekked up the stairs to do my makeup, leaving him to get caught up on text messages he’d ignored over the last several hours.

I stared at myself in the bathroom mirror. Pulling my hair up into a cute messy bun, I took my time, making sure that each stroke of my makeup brush was perfect and that my eyeliner was well-defined and dramatic.

I typically didn’t put much thought into my appearance, but now that Beck was in the picture I maybe wanted to impress him a little.

I grabbed an outfit out of my closet and shoved a few necessary items into an overnight bag before heading back downstairs. Beck was lounging on the couch. I could hear the low rumble of his voice speaking to someone over the phone before I reached the bottom step.

Holding the phone to his ear, his eyes snapped to me. He spoke to the person on the other end of the line, “I’ll take care of it today. I have to go.” He ended the call without saying goodbye.

My heart pinched that he thought I was more important than whatever else he was dealing with.

“You think it’s okay to take them off now?” I questioned, rotating my arm while checking out the patches.

“Yeah, it’s been long enough.” He pulled at my arm and tugged me into his lap.

Fuck, I wanted to kiss him.

So I did.

I threaded my hand through the back of his hair and pulled his lips to mine. They were so very fucking soft. I ran my tongue over the seam of his mouth. *Please*. He was almost tentative about it, but then allowed me to sweep my tongue over his in a slow, unhurried stroke. He tasted like mint with a faint trace of the coffee we’d shared together this morning after we each had taken a shower at his apartment. The warmth of his body pressed against mine and I melted into him.

His hands moved up and down my back in slow circles as our lips moved in a sensual rhythm. Our breathing was in sync, and I felt my body tingle as his touch moved from my back to my waist, pulling me even closer.

I moaned softly as the kiss deepened. I felt like I was floating, the taste of his lips like a drug, making me crave more and more. Wanting him to kiss me like this endlessly.

I was in a trance, and when we finally pulled apart, he looked up at me as if he saw something new in my eyes.

And just like that, the moment had passed.

He readjusted me on his lap and began to peel each section off entirely.

The black lines of the tattoo were faint, but I knew they would develop a bit over the next few hours according to the instructions.

Despite that, I thought it was beautiful. A realistic bunch of sunflowers, with their petals and leaves stretching around the curves of my arm.

“If you decide you want this permanently, I know someone who would do a great job for you,” he said, rubbing his hand over the finished product. “It looks great on you.”

I smiled. “I know it's still a bit faint, but could you snap a picture for me? I so want to share this on my Instagram. I look like such a badass.”

“Yes. Sunflowers are so very badass", he quipped, knocking under my chin with the crook of his index finger. “Let’s get you to work.”

He smacked my ass, encouraging me to hop up.

I dressed quickly, knowing that we needed to leave soon but not totally wanting to.

I would have rather spent the day riding his cock and begging him to let me come.

Great, now I had that mental image to deal with while trying to serve tables.

Making it through the evening was going to seriously suck.

Outside, he snapped a pic of me on my phone. Gosh, I was adorable. I couldn't wait to show Andi and tell her all about these recent developments.

CHAPTER TEN

Beck

This girl had me fucking feral.

This was all so new for me, I was genuinely at a loss for what to do about… any of it. It was almost as if I couldn't bear to keep myself away from her. I wanted to crawl inside her chest cavity and make my home there.

Or rather, for her to crawl inside mine.

Either would suffice.

What had I been thinking just tying her up and coming all over her stomach without offering her any sort of release in return?

I *wasn't* thinking. I was desperate. She drove me insane.

I'd *never* in my fucking life thought I was capable of coming so hard.

But it wouldn't happen again. At least not like that.

I just needed to figure some things out first.

Like… *how*… to best do any of this.

I had zero experience.

Zero.

It was pretty easy to go twenty-two years of your life without getting laid when you looked upon the large majority of other humans with disgust. No other woman before her had ever made me feel any kind of way. I just… didn't care.

Only her. *Cuore mio*.

My heart.

Because I sure as fuck didn't have one of my own before now. She was it somehow.

I had no explanation for it. Every time our eyes met, the air was sucked from my lungs. The universe had worked it out to make her mine, and I would *not* be letting her go.

There was only one way I could think of to gain any kind of experience aside from fucking some random person, which wasn't going to happen.

The mere thought of trying to get it up for anyone else made me want to actually vomit.

But I could *watch* and learn.

And I was watching when I heard the first knock at the door. It was quiet, but still enough to pull my attention away from my laptop screen.

I had never thought of myself as a voyeur, but it was the only way I could figure any of this out.

The thought of fucking her senseless was both intoxicating and unnerving.

I furrowed my brow as I took in a particularly graphic scene of a man shoving a woman's thighs apart and down into the mattress, then parting the lips of her pussy before sucking her clit into his mouth.

Her desperate moans spilled into the room.

Huh… so that's how it was.

The girl was naked on her back, her stomach rising and falling with each heavy breath. Her hair was a waterfall of black, nearly touching the floor. Her breasts rose and fell, barely covered by her sheer bra.

That *hair*. It reminded me of TK's.

I groaned.

Another knock, louder this time. I paused the video and reluctantly dragged my gaze away from the scene.

"It's open," I yelled, pressing play again — uncaring if they were bothered in any way by what was on the screen.

It wasn't as if I hadn't walked in on Ijah *actually* having sex numerous times, or as if I hadn't been forced to listen to Law and Alec discuss in great detail every single fucking time they found a girl willing to be shared.

I wasn't entirely convinced they'd ever fucked anyone solo. They seemed to get off on the sharing.

I couldn't understand that at all. The thought of anyone but me ever touching TK again made my fists clench and my throat constrict.

She was *mine* now. She'd said as much herself.

The three of them stepped into the apartment, questioning looks on their faces at the pornographic sounds filling the room that I hadn’t bothered to try and hide.

Why they always felt the need to insert themselves into my personal space when they needed to pick me up for something, I’ll never understand. It was pretty rare that we all ended up together for anything, but Mattia had requested we update the security around the safehouse he forced his wife to live in.

His paranoia seemed to be getting worse and worse as time went on.

Ijah’s gaze immediately flicked to my laptop, the woman now being railed into from behind.

I half expected him to make some kind of joke. He just grunted, amused.

A shit-eating grin spread across Alec’s face. “Does our little Becky finally have a girlfriend?”

Of course, Ijah hadn’t been able to keep his fucking mouth shut.

If rolling my eyes was something I often did, I would have rolled them at Alec now. Instead, I scowled at him.

Law grunted from somewhere on the other side of the room. Surly bastard.

He never had much of anything to say about… anything. He and Alec were polar opposites and I often wondered how they’d become such close friends. They were as close to family as I had. Like brothers, even. But they seemed to have a sort of bond that went beyond what I was capable of forming with either of them.

Ijah spoke up, "The new girl has him all bent out of shape."

I kept my eyes glued to the screen, ignoring their ribbing.

“I’ve never seen someone watch porn so… clinically,” Alec noted.

I dragged my eyes away from the screen. “This does nothing for me,” I responded.

The thought of doing any of this with TK fucking did, though. I readjusted myself uncomfortably.

There was nothing anyone could say to make me feel apologetic about any of this. If anything, I felt a surge of something else: a slight elation at the thought of finally feeling this kind of lustful fixation.

Especially since that fixation was TK.

“I’m not sure watching this shit will actually help accomplish anything.” Ijah’s face was unreadable. “A lot of what you’re going to find on there won’t necessarily translate into a real-life situation.”

Alec guffawed. “Yeah. Come the fuck on, Beck. Like you’re actually going to find her stuck in a dryer somewhere.”

I glared at him out of the corner of my eye, unsure how to respond because I truly had no idea what the fuck he meant by that.

“Pause your shit for later,” Law interrupted. “We’ve got to get going. Alec can teach you some of the ways of the world in the car.” He clapped his friend on the shoulder and headed back toward the door.

I obliged reluctantly. I wasn’t sure how I would focus on any other thing with these thoughts weighing so heavily on my mind. But when Mattia called… It wasn't like I could take a sick day.

What could Alec say that would make me feel any more confident in my capabilities than I already did?

Even if I could learn to make her scream, could I meet her emotional needs in the long run? Was that something she’d need from me?

I wanted to try.

I had a feeling of warmth in my chest that was entirely foreign to me.

It felt… interesting.

To have their support in this, especially after spending so many years feeling like an outsider even in my own circle of friends who were near as fucked up as I was — maybe more so in some ways.

We piled into the SUV and settled in for a fairly long ride. Mattia’s cabin was further upstate, so it was about a two-hour drive.

I clicked my seatbelt into place and rested my head back against the seat.

Did I want Alec’s advice? Yeah, I could use it.

But I was also pretty uncertain about how seriously he’d take this because he didn’t take much of anything seriously at all. I hoped it wouldn’t be some kind of joke to him like everything else.

Ijah started the engine and pulled out onto the road, and it wasn’t long before Alec went right in on me. “Okay, first things first. Please for the love of all things holy, wrap that shit up. We do not need any little murder babies running around the restaurant.”

Law huffed in annoyance and Ijah chuckled from behind the wheel.

“*Murder babies?*” I asked incredulously.

He just looked at me seriously.

“I had a vasectomy years ago,” I told him.

People like me shouldn’t procreate. It was an easy decision despite the fact that I hadn’t been doing any procreation-related activities, to begin with.

He looked surprised at that, then snorted. “Well. STIs are still a thing.”

I nodded, pretending I was concerned about that at all. But I knew that when I finally claimed TK in the way I wanted, there would be nothing between us. She was in no danger of being harmed by me in that way because I was one hundred percent certain that I was clean, and I wanted every fucking part of her. “Noted.”

“Now that we’ve established that,” he continued, “the most important thing is this: girls come first, and at least *twice*.”

Great. I’d already failed at that one spectacularly. “And the best way to make sure that happens is?”

He shrugged. “Doesn’t really matter. Hands or mouth, just start slow and don’t attack her clit like you’re trying to start a fire or something with the amount of friction you’re putting on her. None of that psychotic swipey movement shit you see in porn. That is fake and does not work in real life. I think most guys get off from hard and fast strokes, but girls are different. I’ve found a lot of times they like to be teased, *slowly*. Increase the intensity in small increments and pay attention to what she responds to, then keep doing that until she explodes.”

“Kind of like torturing someone. You find their tolerance level, then push them over the edge, right?” Made sense to me.

“And you say I’m ridiculous.” He rolled his eyes.

“You are most of the time,” Law chimed in.

“Anything else?” I asked.

“Yeah. You’re probably going to get bangxiety the first few times.”

There it was.

I hadn’t been anxious during our first encounter, but I sure as fuck had been after, thinking of all the things I’d done wrong. I needed to remedy that soon. I pulled out my phone and sent her a quick text.

BECK

Thinking about you.

Alec read the words over my shoulder. “Damn, you’ve got it bad.”

“Fuck off,” I grumbled.

I did have it bad, though.

“I have a suggestion,” Ijah inserted himself into the conversation. “Try and think of something gross while you’re fucking, or at least like the most unattractive thing you can come up with.”

My mind immediately went to Andi and I grimaced. “Why?”

“Because you’ll blow your load upon entrance the first time if you don’t.”

Fuck. I hadn’t even thought of that.

We went on talking like that for the remainder of the ride there.

Several hours later, once we finished the updates Mattia had requested, I was anxious to be back home.

I shut the door behind me and locked it, turned to the laptop, and hit play. I watched the video I’d been watching earlier to the end, and then I began searching for more. Searching for all the things Alec had described, and everything in between. I watched for hours, learning all I could, until finally, I felt sure.

Sure that I was more than ready to twist TK into a sexy fucking pretzel and show her all the ways she fucks me up inside that I can’t find the words for.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

TK

I’d worked my way through my morning shift at LC almost mechanically. I knew it was important for me to do the things I needed to do — keep the glassware clean, the corks uncorked, the customers happy. I needed this job, *liked* it, and wanted to keep it.

Some days I just wake up with this kind of hyper uncertainty – energy that needs to be expended from my anxious mind – like I could run a marathon or something just to burn off the excess.

Too bad I don’t run.

I usually had Andi to keep my wandering mind preoccupied. I’d had so much I wanted to tell her, and all of those things I needed an outside opinion on — but she was MIA today.

I struggled to keep my thoughts in check as I worked.

Over the years, I’d created a place in my mind — a box, of sorts — where I placed all of my anxieties and insecurities. I kept that shit locked up tight.

But I was feeling confused and super unconfident about this situation with Beck. On one hand, he seemed to really care about me. Was I misinterpreting basic human decency for his *caring*?

Did he even *have* basic human decency?

I mean, he did go above and beyond when I was sick. I don’t think most people would have reacted that way. Maybe he felt obligated because of the unorthodox tie we had to one another.

It’s not every day that two random people spend time covering up a messy murder together.

Typically, I would choose to shove those feelings to the back of my mind where they belonged.

And keep them there. In the box.

I tried therapy once. Melissa, my therapist, called it a type of selective repression… suppression or some shit. I would rather hide my emotions away than face them.

Of all the things I kept locked down tight, this constantly swirling emotion I felt surrounding Beck was simply the one thing that couldn't really be contained for any significant amount of time.

We had unfinished business.

He'd said I was *his*.

Was that only a heat-of-the-moment thing? Did he really mean it?

These thoughts made it hard to be anywhere, doing anything at all — and hard to go home, to sit so totally alone in my feelings.

With a sigh, I wrapped up my shift and clocked out. I thought about all the advice Melissa had given me, the numerous coping mechanisms I'd resorted to that she'd said were unhealthy.

The ways I'd acted out as a teen just for a rush of anything to keep from being overwhelmed by my insecurities.

I still liked to do stupid shit from time to time, to pull myself out of these moods.

I often sought out a bear to poke, and there was one bear I was dying to poke *so* hard.

If there was one thing I was certain of, it was the look of pure, unadulterated *want* in his eyes and in his actions.

He may not feel any kind of way about me, but there was definitely lust there… and I would use it to my advantage.

I wanted his attention and I knew just how to get it.

I headed up the sidewalk toward my townhouse, unlocked the door, and sprinted to my room, a thrill of excitement washing over me.

This was exactly what I needed.

I stripped and stretched out on my bed. My body hummed with anticipation.

I snapped a picture of my naked tits and texted it to him.

TK

Sucks you're not around today. My body is begging to be used by you again.

I thought for a moment, then sent another.

TK

Ugh. I guess I'll just have to take care of things myself. At least I'll actually get off this time.

Challenge issued.

Not that what happened between us wasn't the hottest experience of my life, but he didn't need to know that. Yet.

I lay there, my mind drifting to all the possible outcomes of this. I closed my eyes and let my hands roam over my skin, tracing the curves of my breasts and the dip of my waist. My fingers found their way between my thighs, and I sucked in a breath as I felt my own wetness.

I think most people have this innate longing to be the center of attention, at least occasionally. I sought out the attention of others as a balm for my own insecurities, and I'd never wanted to be the center of anyone's attention as much as I wanted to be the center of Beck's.

To be the sole focus of such a dangerous man. The thought of it made me shiver.

My phone buzzed a few minutes later, and I felt the hit of endorphins I'd been seeking.

BECK

Don't you dare fucking touch yourself without me.

I shoved two fingers into my soaking cunt and sent him a picture of *that*.

Then another of me flipping him off.

Heh.

I couldn't pry my eyes away from the screen.

My phone vibrated.

BECK

God, you're such a fucking brat.

BECK

I shared my location. Be a good girl and keep that pussy wet for me while you're watching me get closer.

I knew I was in so much fucking trouble, but the thought of him showing up on my doorstep made my heart flutter and my pussy throb.

I was more than ready to finish what we’d started a few nights ago, so I tapped his contact info, pulled up the map on display, and watched with an eagerness I hadn’t felt… maybe ever.

* * *

BECK

I couldn't drive fucking fast enough on my way to her.

I'd planned on paying her a surprise visit later tonight, but my plans went straight out the window the second her first text had come through.

Those tits.

She was *such* a fucking brat. I'd known that about her from the first time we met. It was her personality in her everyday life, not just with me now. She was defiant in a way that made my dick hard — always so adamant that she got her way.

And it fucking *worked* on me, even when giving her her way wasn't necessarily in her best interest.

Shit.

My heart pounded in my chest. Every minute felt like an hour, and all I could think of was the way I wanted to make her feel when our bodies finally slammed into one another. All I wanted was to hear her scream my name as I fucked her into submission.

I drove for a bit, likely too fast. The road was outstretched in front of me, a long black ribbon in the dimming light of the afternoon. With the windows down, the cool wind whipped around me, almost dizzying as my mind swirled with all the ways I wanted to wreck my girl.

God, I just knew she'd look so fucking pretty on her knees for me, my hand twisted in that gorgeous black hair.

For some reason, traffic was heavier than normal the closer I got, and it only became more crammed the further I drove. I veered off the main road in order to cut time, but the side road was worse than the way I'd originally come, everyone else seemingly having the same plan.

It was bumper to bumper, cars inching forward like a slow-moving river of banana pudding.

Of all the *fucking* times. I slammed my hand into the steering wheel.

I needed to get to her. Needed to touch her, needed to see how she touched herself. To learn every inch of her body.

There had to be a car accident or something… this was in no way normal for a town this size. It wasn't even rush hour.

I was beyond frustrated being forced to drive at a snail's pace.

Every vehicle tried to maneuver around another as if they had a chance of getting anywhere sooner than anyone else.

I chose to play the game of avoidance — swerving around cars, cutting off drivers, and generally being a nuisance. The only thing on my mind was getting to her as quickly as possible.

The last few miles seemed to stretch on forever. I pushed every safety limitation, taking turns at risky speeds and flying through intersections without looking.

Everyone else could stop for me. I didn’t give a fuck.

My fingers ached to be inside her, my mouth fucking dying to taste her. I’d painted her with my cum once, but I was more than ready to do it again.

There was a car just ahead and I fully intended on swerving around it. If I could make it past, I'd have a clear path to TK's. As I started to pull out, it jerked as if it knew what I was planning, and meant to block my path.

Mother*fucker*.

Rage. I hit the gas with a vengeance. It was useless for anyone to try and interfere with my current state of need.

The twat must have sensed my recklessness because they swerved out of the way.

Good on them, because I would have fucking slammed into them and driven away without a second thought.

When I finally pulled onto TK’s street, my cock throbbed painfully against the zipper of my jeans.

She was *mine*.

Mine to kiss. Mine to taste. Mine to touch. Mine to fuck, in every way imaginable.

And I was about to show her just that.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Beck

I don't know that I've ever been nervous about anything in my life.

Was that what this feeling was? Anxiety?

Fuck. It was *Bang*xiety.

I stood on TK's doorstep, questioning… everything. But waiting even a second longer to touch her would have quite literally done me in.

Over the last few days, I'd felt like I was being ripped in half — wanting this so fucking much and dreading it at the same time.

I tested the door, hoping she'd left it open for me and she had. I closed it behind me and locked it. I would be having a key made after this because the thought of just anyone being able to walk in on her while she was home alone and totally unaware made my skin crawl.

Standing in the doorway to her bedroom, I temporarily forgot how to breathe.

She was lying in bed, her white, fluffy down comforter engulfing her lithe body. Her eyes were closed, and the sound of her heavy breathing was music to my ears. Her body arched with pleasure, her skin tinged with a deep flush.

The hot pink vibrator seemed to fit perfectly in her tiny hand as she stroked it in and out of that tight little cunt, caressing and teasing her most sensitive spots. She moaned and writhed as she increased the intensity of her strokes.

And, *goddamn*.

My hand wandered to my raging hard-on.

I squeezed my dick painfully, willing it to calm the fuck down.

Her hips bucked and rocked against the bed. With her back bowed, she released a throaty moan that echoed off the walls. She allowed herself to let go, giving in to the ecstasy and I wanted nothing more than to drown in the sight of it.

She opened her eyes, and her gaze snapped to mine.

She lay there panting, her entire body vibrating from the intensity of it all. She smiled slowly, clearly content and pleased with herself.

But we both knew that was just the beginning.

“Couldn’t wait for me?” I purred.

“I was just keeping it wet for you. Like you asked,” she smirked.

I grabbed the hem of my shirt and tugged it up, eyes closed as I pulled it over my head. The fabric was soft against my skin, my every nerve ending on fire as I let go, feeling the air cool against me as it dropped to the ground.

I stalked toward her.

I could get used to this particular brand of stalking.

“So obedient,” I rasped. “Such a good fucking girl.”

Her eyes lit up at my praise.

I slid my body over hers, bracketing her in with my forearms. The feel of her hot skin against my own was borderline intoxicating.

My heart slammed against my rib cage.

“Tell me now if there’s anything you don’t want from me.” I ran my nose along the side of her neck, stopping to place a less-than-chaste kiss on the shell of her ear.

I slipped the vibrator from her hand, noticing the open drawer of her nightstand.

So… My girl liked to *play*.

“You said I was yours,” she stated plainly, staring into my fucking soul. “Did you mean that?”

I bent down, kissing her slowly, torturously — in a way that eddied every coherent thought left in my rapidly melting brain. “Yes,” I murmured against her pouty lips.

“Then I want whatever you have to offer. All of it. If I’m yours, I’m yours to do whatever you want with.”

She had no idea what she was asking for. The things I wanted to do to her. *Every* fucking thing.

Her vibrator was like a nuclear force in my hand, begging to be used, the need to fill both her holes totally overpowering everything else.

I wanted to overwhelm her senses, ruin her for anyone else.

Would she like that?

I needed to go slow, for both our sakes.

“Get out of your own head and fuck me, Beck,” she cooed.

Brat.

I dragged myself away from her, standing to relieve myself of the rest of my clothes.

She arched an eyebrow at me as I began rifling through her drawer.

A long, lean teal dildo jumped out at me. It was silkily textured and clearly perfect for what I had in mind.

I chucked it onto the bed along with a bottle of water-based lube, and she reached out and grabbed the base of my cock.

I’d never had another person’s hands on my body in this way, and having her be the first sent me spiraling.

She pumped her hand once and I shuddered.

Maybe I should let this happen because fuck knows if I don’t, I won’t last all of three seconds once I’m finally inside her.

And when she wrapped her gorgeous lips around the head of my cock, I felt like what was left of my soul was being sucked from my body. It was hers anyway. *Fuck*, take it.

I twisted her long, soft hair around my hand like a tether, gently tugging at the roots, my head thrown back in sheer ecstasy as she worked her mouth back and forth over my substantial length.

I regretted not pulling my phone out of my pocket before losing my pants. She was a goddess like this, and I wanted to preserve the way she looked right now for all of eternity. The thought was nice, but I couldn’t have wrenched myself from the experience of that moment even if I’d wanted to, especially not when she looked up at me through her long, dark eyelashes.

I was gone for her.

She pulled off of me to say, “God, I’ve never sucked a cock this big before.”

I tightened my grip on her hair and jerked her head back, forcing her to look me in the eye. “I don’t like that you’re thinking about other cocks right now, cuore mio.” I groaned as she pulled away from my grip and sucked me *hard*.

She hummed around me, sending a jolt straight to my balls.

“Gag me with it, make me forget the others,” she muttered.

I wrapped my free hand around the front of her throat, the urge to cut off her airway all-consuming but I tamped it down.

The only thing removing her ability to breathe would be my cock down her throat. I shoved myself deep, feeling her fight against her gag reflex, her stormy eyes watering more and more with each thrust.

“There won’t be any others, because I’ll fucking murder any man you spare a second glance,” I vowed. “This is the only cock you’ll be taking. Ever. Because that pretty little mouth of yours was made for it, wasn’t it?”

I thrust harder, faster.

A surge of electricity shot through my body and I had to hold on to the bedpost for support. TK wrapped her arms around the back of my thighs, holding me to her tightly as wave after wave of immense pleasure flooded my senses and I emptied everything I had into her.

After what felt like an eternity, I stepped away… speechless, *emotions* running high.

She pulled me onto her again. I wanted to give her what I knew she needed. I hoped that I knew how.

I felt so many things that I didn't fully understand.

I was determined to show her those things.

I wanted her to know she was the only one, even if I wasn't sure why or how.

I needed to explore her body and find what she liked. Learn everything about her, what made her cry out like she had just a few minutes ago. I wanted it to be my name on her lips the next time she came, reverberating throughout the room.

I wanted to make her feel as good as she’d made me feel… twice now, without reciprocation.

That was unacceptable.

“Tell me what you like,” I demanded.

“I’m so fucking wet right now, I don’t think there’s anything you could do that I wouldn’t like.” She was needy. And it was my fault.

“Show me… what you need,” I begged, flipping our positions, forcing her to straddle me.

“You always ask so much of the girls you fuck?” She questioned jokingly.

I hesitated but looked straight into her eyes when I said, "There are no other girls, cuore mio. Just you. And I want to get it right for you. I want to fuck you in every way possible. Your mouth. Your pussy. Your tits. Your ass.” Her breathing hitched at the last one and I made a mental note of it. “With my hands, my mouth, and all those toys you have in that drawer. I want to do all the things I’ve never done before, never wanted to do. Until you.” I ran my hand over the slope of her perfect ass.

“You’re lying,” she tried convincing me to level with her, assuming that I was not being serious. That I couldn’t possibly be.

“Why would I lie about something like this?” I looked at her seriously, and with a hand on each of her hips, I rubbed her pussy over my already-hardening cock, causing us both to shudder.

“I… I don’t know.” Her eyes fluttered shut.

“I guess I’ll just have to figure out what it is that you need on my own then, hmm?” I asked.

I wrapped one hand around the back of her thigh, and ran two fingers through the folds of her slick pussy from behind, not stopping until I reached her tight little asshole.

I tested the resistance there. She sucked in a breath.

“You like that?” I asked, fucking her ass with my middle finger.

She nodded quickly, her breaths coming in quick huffs.

“Yeah? You want me to fuck you here?” I questioned her, already knowing the answer.

More nodding.

“Words, TK,” I instructed.

“Yes. Please,” she panted.

I would give my girl what she wanted. Just not in the way I knew she had in mind.

Not yet, anyway.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

TK

Shocked was an understatement.

I was seriously so sure that Beck had to be at least a bit of a manwhore, because I mean.. *look at him*.

And he'd just confessed to me that he had never been with anyone. That he was a virgin.

Depraved in all the ways except for this one, I suppose.

This was somewhat of a mindfuck. Was I excited? Fuck, yes.

But I was also in disbelief, and couldn't help but feel this kind of sense of being *chosen* by him for this pivotal life moment.

God, there were so many things I could teach him.

I'd never been anyone's first before, and the idea of being Beck's first *anything* shoved my heart into my throat.

He'd been so good at hiding what he felt, his face so totally unreadable. I'd wondered all this time if he'd felt as drawn to me as I did to him, and I finally had my answer.

Yes. Irrevocably, *yes*.

Our eyes locked, pulling me from my racing thoughts. As if his finger pumping in and out of my ass shouldn't have done the trick.

I leaned forward and kissed him. This one was different from the others.

More eager. On both our parts.

I hadn't expected to want something as simple as a kiss from him so badly.

I pulled away reluctantly, feeling a moment of uncertainty, not knowing what to expect next.

But I was sure of the only important thing: I wanted whatever it was.

He flipped our positions again, allowing him to cover my body with his own and I was delirious with the need for him to be inside me.

Now.

Beck had other plans.

His wild eyes locked with mine before darting to my spread thighs.

He ran his long, thick fingers over my body. Spreading my legs apart, he roughly shoved my knees into a bent position, allowing him free access to my cunt and ass.

I groaned in pleasure as he stroked my clit while shoving two fingers into my slick entrance. His touch was far too expert for someone who’d never done this before.

Maybe it was just because it was him.

Undiluted fire rushed through my veins as I squirmed beneath him.

"God, you're so wet. So fucking tight. I won't be able to think straight once I'm inside you," he said, pumping his fingers in and out of me.

His hand left me for a split second to grab the bottle of lube I’d forgotten he’d taken out. When it returned it was slick with the cool liquid. He smoothed it over his fingers, then let some drip into the crease of my ass. I gasped at the shock of cold against my overheated skin, but the sensation was quickly replaced with something new and raw.

He pumped his fingers in and out of my pussy just once before moving them to my ass.

I've never let anyone else touch me there, and now Beck had twice. I'd let him do anything to me. He could slit my throat and I'd thank him. Which was probably not too far of a reach when it came to things he was willing to do to a person for his own pleasure.

My head was spinning and I wasn't sure I still had a full grasp on reality.

After teasing my ass with his fingers, he pulled away and lubed up the toy he’d chosen to play with. He coated it with lube and then slowly worked it inside me as I lay still, feeling every inch stretch me deliciously.

"Relax for me."

I did. His words were like a compulsion to me.

"Good girl." He inched the toy inside me. I expected it to be uncomfortable, but it was... good. Tight. Overwhelming in the best way.

As he slowly moved it in and out, he moved his other hand to my clit, paying it glorious attention. My brain emptied of all thoughts.

I felt floaty and otherworldly.

He murmured words of encouragement against my skin, alternately kissing the bend of my knee between his affirmations, until he finally pushed it all the way in, eliciting a cry from my lips.

"Mmm," he growled. "I could do this all night. Watch you fall apart over and over."

"P-please," I pleaded.

He readjusted his position, bringing his face between my legs, and when he sucked my clit into his mouth I detonated with the strongest orgasm of my life. I bucked against him as it rolled through my body.

I had no time to recover before he pulled away from me and guided me onto my hands and knees.

I expected him to remove the toy from my ass, but instead, he wrapped his hands around the back of my neck and forced the side of my face hard into the mattress.

This was the side of him I wanted.

The feral side, filled with need. I wanted him driven by his baser desires. I wanted him to cave to them completely.

I felt the head of his cock nudge at my entrance and I wanted nothing more than to be filled up by him, no matter how tight of a fit it might be between the size of him and my already-filled ass.

I wanted him to overwhelm me.

Taking two dicks at once had always been a secret fantasy of mine. One I'd thought would never happen. This was as close as I'd ever get because there was no one else I'd ever let own my body in this way.

I was fully Beck's. Endgame. Would love to see him try and get rid of me now.

He shoved into me, subsequently shoving the breath from my lungs.

I gasped as the broad, thick head of him pushed past my lips, stroking the inner walls of my pussy and stretching it to fit his girth. The sensation of being filled to capacity was almost too much and I fucking *loved* it.

He pulled back and slammed into me again, causing me to cry out. "I-I can't," I started.

"You can. *You will*. Fucking *take it.*" His words lit me up inside.

He fucked me with a ferocity that was so purely *Beck*. "So good for me, cuore mio," he crooned. "Such a good fucking girl."

My vision became hazy and my skin prickled over every square inch of it. My muscles contracted almost violently and my body was overtaken by a wave of heat so intense that I could have burnt alive and died happily from it. Sweat beaded along my hairline and ran down the sides of my face, mixing with tears of pure ecstasy. Somehow, I was spiraling hard and fast toward another orgasm.

“Beck!” I wailed.

I wanted to believe that his name tumbling from my mouth was what really did it for him because he suddenly came with me.

He braced one hand above my head, every muscle in his body contracting. His hips bucked wildly against mine as I felt him pulse inside me, the warmth of his release filling me up.

He released a long, satisfied groan as he eased out of me and carefully removed the toy. The sudden emptiness made my core ache. It was almost too much, even more so than it had felt when I was over-full.

I tried to get up, or at least readjust myself into a more comfortable position, but he shoved me back down. “Not yet,” he murmured. I tilted my head so that I could see him, his gorgeous face twisted in awe as he watched his cum drip from my pussy. He gathered what had leaked out on two fingers and shoved it back inside me. “So fucking pretty,” he muttered.

God, why was that so hot?

Everything about him was too much. My heart was so fucking full of every single emotion for this man and I barely knew him.

Finally, he lowered himself to the bed, pulling me with him. He wrapped me in his arms more tenderly than I would have expected from him, his calloused hands combed gently through my hair, petting me like I was something precious. He kissed my forehead, our sweat-slick bodies fitting together like two pieces of a fucked-up jigsaw puzzle and my mind was quiet.

All of my previous insecurities had disintegrated into nothing.

I breathed him in deeply, relishing the moment and hoping that it wouldn’t do the same.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Beck

I rifled through TK’s kitchen cabinets, looking for a suitable breakfast. I wasn’t much on sugar, and it seemed she was a breakfast cereal enthusiast.

I looked over to where she sat at her kitchen table, happily munching on a bowl of Cinnamon Toast Crunch. I eyed the bowl of apples on the counter, then returned my gaze to her. A bit of milk dribbled from the corner of her mouth and I wished I were close enough to reach out and wipe it away with my thumb. How was she so goddamn gorgeous, even like this?

Fuck it.

I grabbed a bowl and spoon and pulled the milk back out of the fridge, pulling up a seat next to her and filling my bowl.

“How did you sleep, sweet girl?” I asked, tucking a loose strand of hair behind her tiny ear.

She laughed. “New nickname? What happened to the other? Decided to call me something nicer now?”

Nicer? She must not know what my other little name for her means. I liked the thought of that.

I bit back the grin that threatened to overtake my face. “You’re just sugary sweet this morning,” I noted, dusting a sprinkle of cinnamon sugar from her chin and leaning in to kiss the offending area, using my tongue and teeth.

She hummed. “I guess I need a nickname for you too, then.” I was afraid to ask what she may have in mind. “But to answer your question, I slept better than I have in a long time.”

“Me too,” I admitted. Apparently, her presence in bed was a sedative to me, or maybe it was the way I spent myself before sleeping when she was involved.

She typed something on her phone, then looked up at me innocently. “So, what are your plans for today, patata dolce?”

Sweet potato. She’d butchered the pronunciation and I was full-on laughing now. I hadn’t felt free enough to do so in so long. I didn’t have the heart to tell her that translation websites don’t always give the most accurate translations for things.

Before I could answer, her doorbell rang, the sound amplified in the small space.

TK startled, giving me a puzzled look. “I’ll see who it is.”

She made to get up, but I quickly placed a firm hand on her shoulder and gestured for her to remain seated. “Finish your breakfast.” It came out in the same tone that Ijah had used in the past to fret over me when I was a child and I cringed internally.

I swung the door inward and leaned casually onto the frame. I eyed the man standing on TK’s doorstep, quickly realizing why he was there.

He wore grey slacks and a crisp, white button-down shirt. He could’ve passed for your average businessman, but the badge, utility belt, and pepper spray gave it away.

He was short and thickset — disproportionally wide, and balding. He tried to present himself with an air of authority, but I wasn’t fucking buying it.

“Can I help you?” I cocked a questioning eyebrow at him.

“Good morning,” he said politely, but there was an air of seriousness about him that set me on edge. “My name is Detective Justin Carson. Do you live here? I was wondering if I might ask you a few questions.”

“I don’t,” I stated plainly, hoping TK would keep her ass sat.

Fat chance.

Her warm hand tugged at my elbow, head popping up from beneath my arm with a wide smile. “Who’s here?” She asked, too cheerful for the answer she was about to get to that question.

Justin reached his hand out to shake hers. I angled my body in front of her, taking his hand in my own instead, intentionally blocking any interaction between the two of them.

"This is Detective Carson," I cut him off as he opened his mouth to speak. "He says he has a question for you?" I directed this at him, framing the sentence as a question rather than a statement.

He cleared his throat. "Yes, your neighbor. Alexander Benz? He's… *passed away*…" He paused, gauging our reactions — neither of us gave one. "Under some very strange circumstances," he continued. "I wondered if maybe any of his neighbors had had any interactions with him in the days leading up to his unfortunate demise."

TK huffed. Actually huffed. She wormed her way around me until she was face to face with the detective. "I worked with Alex and lived next to him for close to a year. He was a fucking menace and whatever happened to him, you won't find anyone around here who's sorry about it." She shrugged.

I had to force myself not to gape at her.

"I… see," he said, writing something on his stupid little notepad. I wanted to rip it from his hands and shove it down his throat. Nothing TK had said needed to be *noted*. He turned to me again. "And you?"

"I don't live here and this is only the second time I've visited," I said flatly. "Anything else?"

He pursed his lips and nodded once. His eyes bounced back and forth between the two of us, scrutinizing.

After a moment of uncomfortable silence, he spoke again. "We suspect foul play. You should keep that in mind for the remainder of this conversation."

I frowned. "This is a sketchy neighborhood," I said, gesturing beyond him. "One I won't be sad for my girl to leave behind when I move her out of this shithole —"

"Hey!" TK cut me off, smacking me in the stomach with the back of her hand. I puffed, doubling over a bit because she'd caught me off guard. "My house is not a shithole!"

I glared at her, silently begging her to keep her beautiful mouth closed. Regaining my composure, I turned back to Detective Carson. "Regardless," I shot her a look out of the corner of my eye, daring her to speak again. "You can take your pick of the deviants living in this complex. Question them."

"*Deviants*," TK blurted. "Please. Tell me what you really think of where I live."

As soon as this door was closed, I was going to lay that cute little ass of hers across my knee and absolutely *redden it*.

I scrubbed a hand over my face. “Is there anything else you need from us?” I asked again. “We were eating breakfast and I’d like to get back to it before your *questioning* leads to our first lovers’ quarrel.”

“*Oh*, we’re *lovers* then,” TK rubbed up and down my bicep with a coy grin on her face.

This woman.

The detective shifted from foot to foot, obviously uncomfortable. “That’s all. If I think of anything else, I’ll be in touch. Thanks.”

He turned to walk away. “Bye, Detective!” TK yelled after him, waving frantically as I jerked her back into the townhouse and slammed the door.

I glowered down at her.

“*What?*” She asked. “I did *good*, thank you.”

“How are you not even shaken up about this? Like… at all?” I questioned, truly surprised at her response and overall demeanor.

“You’re not either.” She shoved her hands into the pockets of her pajama pants and nonchalantly walked back to the kitchen.

I grabbed the back of her shirt and tugged her into me, wrapping her in a bear hug. “I’ll take care of it if it needs taken care of,” I let her know.

“I know you will.” She sounded so certain.

She should be, because I would die before I let anything come between us now.

She pulled away from me again, heading toward the kitchen counter. She grabbed an apple from the bowl and took a paring knife from the drawer below it. She hastily cut into the fruit, trimming away the peel.

“I’m not worried,” she said. “There’s nothing tying us to the scene and even if there was, like DNA or something, they’d have to have something to match it to. You’re not in any criminal databases are you?” She looked up at me through her eyelashes while continuing to peel the apple.

I snorted. “Yeah. No. I’m more responsible than *that*.”

Had she been watching CSI or something?

“Right. So. No worri — *shit!*” She’d carelessly knicked the edge of one of her fingers with the knife.

A small amount of blood beaded around the minor wound. I took her hand in mine, instinctively bringing it to my lips and sucking the red liquid away.

My mind flashed to the last time I'd seen blood beading on her skin and a wave of momentary panic overcame me.

She'd cut herself on my knife that night at Alexander's and I'd run my fingers through it. I was so under her spell, the shock of her being there at all — all of it — that I couldn't remember if I'd cleaned it from my hands before manhandling Alex.

What the actual fuck had I done?

I'd *never* been so thoughtless and irresponsible when dealing with a body, even in my early days.

I wouldn't worry her with this possibility, and wouldn't until I knew for sure that this was why foul play was suspected.

I removed her finger from between my lips and pulled her into me, breathing in her vanilla scent.

"You're way more lovey than I would have thought you'd be," she giggled.

"I have a lifetime of unspent affection, cuore mio. Excuse me if I want to spend it on you now — and for the rest of my days."

I didn't voice the rest of that sentiment — that I wasn't sure how many days that might be. Because I would die before I let anything happen to her as a result of this. I would kill anyone who tried to take her away from me. I would kill *her* if it came to that, and barrel after her into the darkest part of hell because I know that the pieces of my soul somehow know hers, and would find her there.

The thought of both our blood swirling together in a pool on the floor made me irrationally envious of anyone who might find our bodies in the aftermath. Jealous that I couldn't carry out the task and also be the one to witness the beauty of it.

I forced myself to shove those thoughts away. I would find another way out of this. I had the resources to do so.

And if I couldn't, I would reconsider when the time came.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

TK

LC was super busy. I hadn’t had a hot second to give much of my attention to anything aside from rushing out plates of steaming pasta with crunchy breadsticks and *so many* freaking bottles of Cabernet Sauvignon. The evening went by in a total whirlwind.

I took a minute to catch my breath. Looking around, I noticed the clock above the bar. It was already getting late and we wouldn't be open much longer. I felt a surge of guilt for not having had the chance to talk to Andi yet.

I had so much I wanted to tell her, but aside from that she just seemed totally *off*, and I really needed to check on her.

She’d missed her last few shifts, and when she popped in today, it seemed like she brought whatever issues she’d been having with her.

She was distant, that was for sure. She barely spoke to anyone and gave the customers her literal bare minimum, avoiding eye contact and moving on to the next table as quickly as possible.

So very out of character for my bubbly friend.

I wrapped up after closing and scanned the area for her, but she was nowhere to be found. Just as I was about to give up, I caught her slipping inside through the side entrance. She looked up, our eyes meeting briefly before she ducked away into the back room.

This bitch was avoiding me.

If that’s how it was, she could fucking try. But I wasn’t about to let this go. Something was up and I was too nosy to just let it go.

I pretended to go on about my business without seeking her out again and headed out to my car as if I were leaving for the night.

She didn’t know that I’d planned on staying with Beck after work, but that was her own fault for not bothering to speak to me for *days* now.

I pulled into the alley and waited for her to leave. She was too much of a ditz to notice anyone following her. I wasn’t sure she’d go anywhere but home, but I had a gut feeling and my gut was such a bad bitch, honestly. She always knew when something was up.

I’d expected her to take her car, but when she left through the front of the restaurant after locking up, she was on foot.

There goes my fucking plans.

I quietly ducked out of the driver's seat of my car and followed her down the street, keeping my distance.

I had a weird feeling that something bad might happen, but I shoved it away because I was too invested now for my own good.

Andi kept her head down, walking quickly. At that speed, bitch was either on a mission or she used to be a cheerleader.

She was very obviously trying to avoid being seen— to the point that she was totally oblivious to her surroundings.

I followed her down another alley. It was dark, the streetlights barely putting out any light at all due to neglect.

City taxes were too fucking high for that shit, but that was Fate Trace for you.

Passing by a row of dilapidated houses with most of the windows boarded up, I realized she was about to waltz right up to the front door of one.

No fucking thanks, but I'd come this far so I would at least hide in the shadows like a creep and watch from a distance.

Even the surrounding area felt dangerous and I wasn't sure how long my chickenshit ass could hang, nosy or not.

Dread sat in my stomach like a dead weight and I decided to pull my phone out and send Beck my location. Just in case.

I stood nervously, waiting. She'd been inside for too long and despite worrying about being seen, I had to check on her.

There was a window to the side of the house that I knew I'd be able to see inside through, but I wasn't even sure if it led to whatever room she was in. I just had to do anything to make sure she was at least safe, regardless of whatever sketchy shit she was up to.

I sprinted across the street and lifted myself onto my tiptoes, attempting to make out any semblance of what was happening inside.

There was not enough bleach in the world for what I forced my own eyeballs to witness, and unfortunately, this was one of those cliché times when the scene before me was like a bad car accident. I didn't want to see it, but I couldn't look away.

Thankfully I only caught the tail end of Andi straddling some coked-out… *drug dealer?* His pupils were blown the size of dinner plates, gazing over her shoulder into oblivion while she rode him like her own personal pony.

Apparently, coke dick was not yet an issue for this one.

When she climbed off of him, very obviously unsatisfied with the experience, his head lolled to the side. He was on the verge of an overdose-level high.

Which meant that he had no fucking clue what was happening when Andi wasted no time rifling through every corner of the room, collecting whatever he had of value—cash, drugs, and all else she could find—stuffing them into her pockets and bra before bolting out of the room without a second glance behind her.

I heard the front door creak open. Her footsteps sounded down the front steps and onto the sidewalk before she hurried off into the night the same way she'd come.

What in the cinnamon toast fuck had I just witnessed?

I released the breath I'd been holding, fully aware that I'd been holding it all the while unable to force it from my lungs.

I dropped back down to level footing and inched backward, my body colliding with a solid chest.

I jolted and let out a short scream before a calloused hand hooked over my mouth to muffle my cry for help.

Sheer panic.

"*Cuore mio,* calm the fuck down." Beck. Relief flooded through me as he turned me to face him.

He searched my eyes with his own and ran his hands up and down my arms in a soothing motion. "Jesus, you're as white as a sheet and shaking all over. What the fuck are you doing here?"

Once my heart stopped trying to escape from my chest, I found it in me to answer. “I…” I was almost embarrassed to explain myself.

Ugh. Why did I have to be such a freaking busybody? I guess if anyone knew that about me, it was Beck. It wasn't like I had anything to hide here.

He jerked me into him. "*TK…*"

I didn't like for him to call me that now. It made me want to pout. I scrunched up my nose at him and refused to speak again.

He sighed. "You scared the shit out of me sending me your location like that with no context. Fucking *spill*."

"I… followed Andi," I said the last part as quickly as possible.

"You what? Why?" He looked at me, confused.

"She was acting all weird and not herself at work. She didn't speak to me all night! Not even once! And then I felt like she was avoiding me all together toward the end."

He stared down at me, incredulous. "What a fucking welcome change that would be were I in your shoes," he said flatly.

I huffed and shoved away from him, walking back toward the street. He caught up to me and grabbed my hand, holding it as we walked back to LC together in the dark.

I felt much safer with him by my side.

I told him everything I'd seen, all about my accidental voyeurism, and he didn't seem surprised at all. "Sounds like she's hard up for cash."

"Hard up enough to do something like that? To get into someone's house under the guise of fucking them, and then rob them blind? She could get into some serious trouble. And I don't mean with the cops."

He locked eyes with me. "Sounds like he won't even remember she was there. I wouldn't worry about it. And even if it does lead to trouble for her, it's the consequences of her own actions. Nothing you can do about it."

"I know I haven't known her for very long, but this just doesn't seem like her to do something like this, Beck." I shook my head.

He released my hand, putting his arm around my shoulders. "You're right, you haven't known her long."

"Do you know something I don't?" I questioned him.

"No. I've just never been a fan. Andrea is a total wild card, and she has no boundaries. I know you like her, but she may not always have the best interests of those around her in mind." He stroked up and down my arm, as we walked.

"She had my best interests in mind when she took my phone away from me and sent you that naughty text my first night at LC," I chimed. I couldn’t help that my mood took a turn when I saw the look on his face at that.

He stilled. “That was Andrea?”

“It was.”

“And you didn’t tell me this because?”

“Because I liked your response.”

Beck's hazel eyes danced mischievously as he dipped his chin and gazed down at me, the corner of his mouth upturned with a playful smirk.

"You did, did you? And what did you like about it?" He asked.

My face flamed. "Maybe the prospect of whatever punishment you had in mind."

He stopped in the middle of the street and pulled me into him again. We were almost back at LC now. "I still haven't dolled out your punishment for that, have I?"

I rested my chin on his chest, staring up at him. "Oh, I think waiting for days for you to actually get me off was punishment enough."

He kissed my forehead. "Hmm. Maybe I'll have to use that particular punishment again, then. Since you hated it so much. A few days for sneaking off alone tonight, and a few more for being such a smart-mouthed little brat. Tie you up and make you watch me fuck my own hand a few more times..." he trailed off.

I tried to pull away from him, both frustrated at his words, that he would threaten me with something like that, and... slightly turned on, okay?

"Oh, you think you're going somewhere now?" He yanked me close to him, our bodies flush against one another, his hands pressed into the small of my back. He brought his lips closer to mine, and his warm breath fanned across my face. Grabbing my chin between his thumb and forefinger, he pulled me in for a passionate kiss.

He ran his nose along the line of my throat before whispering in my ear, "My greedy little slut doesn't like the thought of being denied, does she?" I couldn't hold the whimper that escaped me. "You just want to come on my cock, huh?"

I nodded quickly.

Beck lifted me up by the backs of my thighs and wrapped my legs around his waist, carrying me through the LC parking lot. The warmth of his skin made me buzz with tension as we crossed into the narrow alley behind the restaurant.

With his hands on my hips, he urged me closer to him until I was flush against his chest. I felt the heat of his body press against my abdomen and I wrapped my arms tightly around him for support as he unbuttoned his pants.

He pressed my shoulder blades into the brick wall, the sharp edges biting into my skin, then grabbed a handful of my skirt, yanking it up around my waist.

I tried to catch my breath.

No chance.

His cold fingers brushed against the bare skin of my thighs as he pulled aside my soaked panties and slid two fingers inside. "God, you're so fucking wet. All this just for me?"

I wrapped my hand around the back of his neck, pulling his lips to mine and kissing him roughly while he finger fucked me through my first orgasm.

"Fuck me, babe," I whimpered as I came down from the high. "Fill me up." I gripped the base of his cock and angled his head at my entrance. My hips jerked in anticipation.

He sucked my tongue into his mouth and I thought I might combust right then and there before he thrust into me.

He pinned me against the wall with one strong arm. His other hand clutched my thigh as he thrust into me roughly and pushed us both closer to the edge with each piston of his hips.

With every thrust, thoughts of Andi faded further away.

By the time we both came — me twice — and made it upstairs to his shower, I was totally consumed by Beck and had forgotten about the rest of the night completely.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

TK

I opened my eyes, blinking against the morning sun beaming in through the windows, and realized I must have fallen asleep on the recliner in the living area last night. We’d snuggled up in the massive chair together, the low sound of a horror movie playing in the background as we shared a little pillow talk about our days before nodding off.

I readjusted the blanket around me and saw Beck curled up on the couch with a mug of steaming coffee in his hand. His eyes were glued to the pages of a book, so lost in it that he hadn't noticed I’d woken up.

My book.

My *smutty WHY CHOOSE* novella.

I popped up so fucking fast and rushed over to him, trying to wrench it from his grip, but he shifted away and pulled me down onto his lap, trapping me in his iron embrace with one arm while the other continued to hold the book up in front of his face as he read.

I squirmed in his grip. “Pleeeeeaaase stop reading that! Why were you in my bag!?”

“Why would I stop reading it? This is good stuff. I just saw it lying on the top and thought I would read what you were reading so we’d have something to talk about.”

Well… when he put it that way. But… “It’s *embarrassing*, that’s why!”

“*Their cocks sawed in and out of me in alternating thrusts, both stretching me gloriously…*” he read aloud.

I squirmed harder, but he didn’t relent. “Beck! Stop!”

Thank *god* he didn’t find the potato shifter book I’d stuffed down into the bottom of my bag.

“*You* stop,” he gave me a squeeze. “Stop fucking wiggling. I’m not trying to embarrass you. I genuinely like this book. It gives me ideas for what *you* might like too.” He smirked.

I gave up fighting against his hold. “What, now you’re going to invite one of your buddies into the bedroom just because of the kind of books I like to read?”

He dropped the book to the floor and settled me on his lap more comfortably. “*Fuck no*.” He kissed me on the nose. “I think I’ve already shown you that I’m more than capable of filling you up and ‘*stretching you gloriously’* without anyone else’s assistance. I can also alternate thrusts next time if you want.”

Fuck.

“Also, I don’t have *buddies*. So don’t get any ideas unless you’re interested in seeing me slit some dude’s throat and forcing you to watch him bleed out.” My eyes scanned eagerly over his face as he met my gaze. His mouth curved into a knowing smile. “Of *course*, you’re interested in that.”

Truthfully, I wasn’t. But his possessiveness really did it for me.

“Tell me what it is you actually like about this book,” he insisted. “Aside from the double dick.”

“Triple dick,” I corrected. “Keep reading.” His eyes bore into me. I loved pushing his buttons. “I guess I just really like the idea of being so loved and cared for that three whole humans would make me the center of their attention like that.” I wrinkled my nose. That probably sounded pretty desperate, but it was true so whatever. “I can’t even fathom being so lovable.”

He nodded. Leaning back and crossing his arms, he looked at me thoughtfully. The warmth in his gaze made me feel squirmy again. “You are,” he said without hesitation. “You sucked me right into your orbit from the very first moment I laid eyes on you. But… I don’t play well with others and I’m not willing to share so, tough shit.”

I was floored by his words and totally unsure how to respond. “I guess I could settle for just one dick,” I offered, nonchalantly.

He tickled me then, and it was so out of character for him that I couldn’t do anything but take it and laugh.

I squealed and slapped at him, but he was relentless. I laughed until my sides ached and when he finally let go, we were both breathless and even he was giggling — it was contagious, and so different from anything I'd heard from him before.

I was helplessly in love with this unexpected show of playfulness.

“What else do you like to read?” he asked me.

“A lot of things,” I replied. “Mostly romance or anything feel-good. I read as an escape. The world is so fucked at times. It’s nice to just have something you can turn to and know it’s going to bring you a small amount of joy, regardless of what’s happening everywhere else.”

I continued for a bit, explaining my favorite tropes and why I liked each of them. I told him about my favorite books and authors, and how I enjoyed a mix of beautiful prose and filthy smut because it was a nice juxtaposition and they truly complemented one another well. Those things made the perfect romance. But a lot of times I also just liked to read things that were simply written and humorous.

But still smutty, of course.

I went into great detail about how third act breakups were the bane of my existence, and how miscommunication in books should be illegal. By the time I stopped talking, Beck was looking at me with apparent affection.

“Sorry,” I told him, feeling a bit embarrassed. “Sometimes I get excited and ramble.”

“I enjoy hearing you excited, talking about the things you love,” he said, twisting an end piece of my hair around his fingers.

To be the center of his attention like this, to feel as if he really cared to hear about the things I like — such normal, boring things — threw me off balance a bit. I wanted to hear about all the things he enjoyed too, even if they were maybe a little gory.

“Tell me about what you do in your spare time,” I asked. “Aside from getting all chokey and throwing the remains into an incinerator.” I made a silly face at him.

He thought for a moment. “I’ll do you one better. Let me show you.”

I was super excited about the prospect of that. “What did you have in mind?”

“Let me take you on a date. I’ll drop you back by your place so you can get ready and I’ll pick you up later this evening once I’m finished with work.”

A date? What alternate reality was I truly living in? “Okay,” I said excitedly. “What should I wear?”

“Something that gives you full range of motion,” he considered. “Preferably as little material as possible.”

I glared at him. “I’m not freezing my ass off just so you can get your rocks off.”

“Oh, cuore mio. You could wear a fucking *potato* sack and I would still get my rocks off.” He tipped under my chin.

Oh, sweet cheese. Maybe he *had* seen the potato shifter book.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

TK

Standing in the bathroom, I held my face close to the mirror and checked out the light layer of foundation and mascara I'd rushed to put on. I didn't really take all that much time getting ready; my hair was pulled back into a low ponytail, and I opted for a pair of lightweight workout shorts, a halter crop tank, and a pair of hightop black Chucks — pretty much exactly what Beck had told me to wear.

I suspected he'd had some kind of physical activity planned. *Gross*. The only physical activity I was really interested in was bouncing on his cock. But I was excited to spend time with him and see what it was that he did in his spare time.

I was pulling on an oversized grey crewneck that was longer than my shorts when the doorbell chimed. I felt a rush of excitement knowing that Beck was on the other side, but when I pulled the door open, still adjusting my sweatshirt onto my body, I curled my lip at who I found on the other side.

Justin fucking Carson.

I didn't feel any of the bravado that I'd felt when Beck was here for our first interaction. I guess I'd pulled some of my bravery from the fact that there was a hulking six-foot-something literal serial killer between us last time.

Remain calm.

He's just looking at you like he can already see through whatever you're about to say to him. NO BIG FREAKING DEAL.

I shook my nerves away. "Detective. What can I do for you?"

“I didn’t expect to find you here. You’ve been away every other time I’ve stopped by,” he said in a gruff voice.

My fucking palms were sweaty. Where the fuck was Beck? *Ugh*. “Yeah. I have a job. And a life.”

“I assume you mean a life that involves spending a lot of time with that boyfriend of yours? *Beck*.”

“What about him?” *What do you know?*

“I know who he is, Tate.” *Apparently, you know who I am too.* “It’s no big secret in this town who he works for, and what kind of *business* they’re actually running.”

“*Pfft*. LC? I work there too. That’s how we met. The only thing concerning about that place is the spaghetti with cilantro sauce.” I cringed. It tasted like *soap*.

“Don’t worry. Your little boyfriend will never be in trouble for the things he does, because every single person of importance at the station is on Mattia’s payroll. It all gets swept under the rug and forgotten about any time something pops up.” He paused, looking at me seriously. “I just want to know. Have any of his more questionable habits rubbed off on *you?*”

I swallowed hard, trying to keep my voice steady. I was in some shit here. “Hmmm. Can’t think of any habits of his that I’ve picked up, but Beck on the other hand has taken a liking to reading fairy porn over the last few days.”

“Cut the bullshit,” he deadpanned. “The blood found at the crime scene… and yes it was a *crime scene*… was *female*. And we’ve been told by multiple of your former coworkers all the things Alexander had to say about you in the weeks leading up to his death.”

The blood. A chill ran down my spine. Would Mattia help me too if it came to that? “Detective, are you even allowed to divulge that information to random people who have nothing to do with this case?”

He stepped in closer, his face now inches from mine. “I’ll determine whether or not you have *anything to do with this case*, Miss Kenneson.” He was trying to intimidate me.

My heart thumped out of my chest once his words sunk in.

Well. Fuck that.

“I don’t know what you’re insinuating, but you can fuck right off, Detective. If you think someone my size could, in any way, overpower someone the size of Alex, you’re fucking delusional. But you know what?

Whatever grown-ass woman did find it within her strength to do just that, good for her. He was a fucking rapist piece of shit and the world is a better place without him. Have a nice day.”

I slammed the door in his face, now breathing heavily.

I needed a fucking drink.

I pulled a can of sparkling pear cider from the fridge and chugged. I’m a lightweight, okay? Stop judging.

I watched him walk back to his unmarked car through my kitchen window, my eyes glued to the back of his fat head.

What now? Would he try to pin this on me?

I didn't want to think about it, so I shoved it into the box and locked it up tight. I would pull it back out later because Beck needed to know - but I wouldn’t let this or anything else in the world ruin our first date.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Beck

I arrived at TK’s place and walked along the curved sidewalk that branched off, leading to her front door. Running my hand through my hair, I admitted to myself that I was fucking excited. I couldn’t wait to toss her around on the mats.

I let myself in through the front door and nudged my shoes off. I sauntered toward the kitchen, my feet sinking into the plush entryway rug.

Immediately, I knew that something was off. She usually had this air about her that set me at ease, but this evening she looked as if someone had popped her favorite balloon.

“Hey,” I said, pulling her in for a kiss. “You ready?” She tasted fruity, and there was a faint trace of alcohol on her lips.

She’d been drinking. Was she nervous?

How could she be nervous about something as simple as this when I’d had my mouth on every square inch of her perfect body?

Her perfect body that looked fucking incredible with that huge ass sweatshirt hanging off of one shoulder. I wanted to strip it off her and see the rest. And those legs. So fucking long and toned.

I adjusted myself in my pants. “You okay?”

She twisted a stray strand of hair nervously around her fingers. “Yeah. Perfect. Ready?”

My chatty girl had become a woman of few words. “Hey. What’s wrong?”

“Fuck. Of course, you can tell.”

I ran my hand along her jaw and cusped her head in my palm, just behind her ear. I could never seem to touch her enough. “Yeah, I can fucking tell,” I replied, kissing the corner of her mouth. “Talk.”

“The detective stopped by again.” She paused. “He said there was blood at the scene. *Female* blood. He was being all intimidating and asshole-ish. He totally thinks it was me.”

I would fucking end him. “What did you say to him?” I loved TK, but she seriously spoke without thinking way too often for her own good.

I froze at that thought.

Loved her?

The thought had never crossed my mind until now, but she was so many things to me that I never thought I would have. A real friend. Someone who made me laugh and look forward to seeing them. Someone who saw every dark part of me and still wanted nothing more than to be near me. Someone who I was ridiculously and inexplicably attracted to in every single way.

Be still my fucking cold black heart. I loved her.

“There’s no way they can tie this to you. They have nothing to compare the DNA sample to and no plausible evidence that would allow them to…”

“His phone records,” she blurted out as if she’s just realized it herself. “He texted me to come over that night.”

'“Did you reply?”

“No. I just… went. You know the rest.”

I released a long breath. “Listen,” I hugged her close to me and rubbed her back in what I hoped was a soothing gesture. Comforting her, I sometimes felt like that gif of the guy patting the girl with a broom, but I tried to just do what felt right to me. “I’m going to doctor footage at LC to make it look like we were on a date that night, and went up to my apartment after and stayed there for the rest of the night. It clears me and it clears you.”

“Will that be enough?” She questioned. “I’m not sure you’re the most reliable alibi.”

I scoffed.

“I’m serious,” she insisted. “Detective Carson was straight up about the fact that he knows all of your business and what kind of crap LC deals in.”

That was no surprise. He was probably on Mattia’s payroll, and if not him, then his boss.

I looked at her seriously. “I promise. Whatever happens, I will take care of it. Trust me, okay?”

She laid her head on my chest and I breathed in her scent.

I loved her.

And I would end us both before I let this affect her life in any real way.

If she goes, I go. I can’t go back to how lonely and fucking miserable my life was without her in it.

We rode together in comfortable silence, both of us reeling a little from this new development.

When we pulled up to the gym, I tugged at the hem of her shirt. “I can’t wait to see what you have on underneath this.”

“What if I told you I don't have anything on underneath it?” She teased.

She was being playful again, and I was glad because things were about to get *really* playful once we were inside.

“Even better. I’d love to wrestle you naked,” I smirked.

“Wrestle?” I saw the surprise in her eyes. Not what she expected, then. I kind of loved catching her off guard. We continued walking down the narrow sidewalk until we reached the entrance, where bright neon letters spelled out ‘The Chokehold Factory’. She looked up at me with wide eyes and asked disbelievingly, “What is this place?”

“My gym. I’ve been practicing BJJ here for years and I cannot wait to toss your cute little ass around a bit.” I scanned my keycard and held the door open for her, smacking it for emphasis. Her ass, that is.

She was stunning. Effortlessly so, and the way her hips swayed as she walked ahead of me was fucking hypnotic.

I led her to the mats. The gym was empty at this time of the evening, as it usually was. All the members had their own keys and could come and go as they pleased outside of class times, but it was small and once I’d made my way up through the ranks, I typically came alone to work on strength and conditioning. On some occasions I would practice with Alec or Law, just to be sure I didn’t lose what I’d learned.

TK peeled off her shirt and what she had on underneath made my eyes bulge from my head. It was perfect for the exercises we were about to do, but the exposed strip of her abdomen had me ready to crawl on my knees.

My dick was rock hard just from the sight of her. I stripped from my sweatpants and inconspicuously tucked it into the band of my shorts, then tugged my own shirt over my head.

She turned to look at me, and her eyes went feral. “Who would have thought my big bad Becky boy was a fan of hoochie daddy shorts?”

Becky boy? Hoochie da…? What?

“I think I’d rather you go back to calling me patata dolce.”

Her eyes gleamed with mirth. “Not a fucking chance.”

I took a step toward her, “Lesson number one: don’t tease the instructor.”

I crouched down and lunged forward, grabbing the backs of her thighs and stepping into her. I was more gentle than usual, but the effect was the same.

She went down.

We moved and twisted around each other, TK giggling almost maniacally.

Eventually, we actually practiced. I taught her the basic moves and she picked them up quickly. I was so impressed with her. I should have known she’d be eager to learn something that allowed her to express her secret need for violence.

I couldn’t keep my hands off of her, and it seemed she was having the same problem because at one point I twisted her into a hot-as-fuck little pretzel and her only response was to grab me by the dick.

“Watch it,” I grunted. “Anyone could come in and I would hate to have to gouge their eyeballs out with my divot tool for watching me fuck you into this mat.”

Her eyes darkened and I knew I’d flipped the right switch.

Good.

It had been a while since I’d stabbed through the gelatinous tissue of someone’s eye anyway.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

TK

"Strip."

Just one word from him and I was done for.

My eyes darted toward the door, but Beck jerked my face back toward him. "Too late to worry about that now, cuore mio," he chided, sucking my bottom lip into his mouth. "Strip."

I was already soaked for him. The way his body moved with such fluid grace throughout the course of the evening had twisted my fucking insides. He was beauty in motion, every movement calculated and perfect.

He was perfect.

I'd been captivated, and I wanted to climb him like a fucking tree.

We hadn't worked out so hard that we were sweaty and disgusting, so thank fuck for that. I hesitated for a moment longer, thinking how totally grand it would be to narrowly avoid being taken in for questioning about a murder that I very much played a part in, only to be arrested for public indecency.

YOLO.

I slipped off my shoes and socks, then reached behind my neck and grabbed the thin fabric of my crop top. I pulled it over my head and dropped it to the floor, exposing my rock-hard nipples. I untied my shorts and let them fall to the mat, along with my panties.

Beck looked me over with hungry eyes. Like he might eat me alive.

I wanted him to *devour* me.

I took a slow step forward and wrapped my hands around his bare waist. His thick cock pressed into my torso and I placed one slow, open-mouthed kiss on his muscled chest.

Then another.

I wanted my teeth and tongue on every part of him.

I licked it, so it's mine.

"Mmmm, being my sweet girl tonight, cuore mio? Always so good for me when you're feeling like a needy little whore."

A quiet breath stuttered out of me at his words. Ugh, he was *so goddamn sexy*. How was he already such an elite dirty talker?

I liked the thought that maybe I just turned him on that much, but who honestly cares? Just keep talking, babe because *fuck me* I can't get enough.

He gripped the back of my neck and leaned down to kiss each corner of my mouth, holding me in place and denying me what he knew I really wanted.

I could kiss him for hours. For days.

I flicked my tongue over the center of his perfect, pouty lips.

"I like you sweet, *pet*. Like putty in my hands," he continued, speaking the words against my lips — which was my favorite fucking thing he liked to do. "Do you know why that is, cuore mio?"

"Why?" I whimpered. He was right. I was such fucking putty when he held me like this. Goo, even. Puddle on the floor.

"Because you sucked me into your orbit with your feisty little attitude. I want every part of you. Every phase, every mood. All that you have to offer." He bit my lower lip, tugging gently before releasing. "But *feisty* TK is my favorite. And there is nothing I love more than fucking the *sweet* right out of you."

I couldn't have dropped to my knees any faster.

I slipped his shorts and boxers down his thick thighs. He kicked them to the side.

"I'm so fucking *lucky*. Look at you," he cooed, gripping my chin and nudging my mouth open.

He threaded his fingers through the back of my hair, gripping roughly at the roots, and jerked his hips forward, guiding his fucking gorgeous cock past my eagerly waiting lips.

I adjusted myself on my knees and bobbed my head forward, taking as much of him as I could. I felt him hit the back of my throat and decided to use this as an opportunity to work on my gag reflex. I sucked him deeper, pressing myself forward until my lips were flush with his pelvis. I couldn't breathe. But the loving, almost awestruck way he stroked my cheek as I looked up at him through my tear-soaked lashes made this moment worth every single second of oxygen deprivation.

I would suffocate for this man.

I hollowed out my cheeks and pulled back, swirling my tongue around the tip before sucking it into my mouth and releasing it again with a gentle pop.

In the past, I'd never truly enjoyed this part of sex, but with him it was different. I loved the feel of him in my mouth. Down my throat. Overwhelming my senses.

"You taste like fucking heaven," I told him, taking him deeply again.

His body stuttered. I could drown in this feeling, knowing I had this effect on him.

I pulled myself back again, leaning forward quickly to lick a small drop of precum beading at his slit. "Mmph… need more, Beck. Please."

Thankfully, he knew what I wanted without needing me to spell it out for him — before I could take my next breath, he jerked my head forward and shoved into me aggressively.

I craved this side of him, this almost-violence.

He fucked my mouth, each thrust stealing the air from my lungs… each thrust tossing another drop of gasoline onto the slow-growing fire in the pit of my stomach.

"You are… so. Fucking. *Perfect*." Each word was punctuated by another jerk of his hips forward.

I couldn't take it anymore, my needy cunt all but begging for contact.

I slid my hand down his outer thigh, loving the feel of his erratic movements beneath my palm, and slipped it deftly between my legs.

With three fingers, I slowly circled my clit — not enough movement or pressure to make myself come, but enough to relieve the building ache until I could have him inside me.

I moaned around his cock, the intense combination of sensations sending me spiraling into the abyss.

The corners of my vision fuzzed. Being used by Beck was everything and more and I never wanted this feeling to end.

I increased the pressure on my clit and hummed around his length.

Just when I thought he might be close, he pulled away from me abruptly and stood looking down at me, slowly stroking his thick cock.

Ugh, so hot.

I reached for him, leaning forward with my tongue out. I wanted to make him come, to taste his release.

He dropped to his knees in front of me, pulling me flush against him. “I get so lost in you, so wrapped up in you… I can’t fucking *think*.” He buried his face in my neck, groaning into my heated skin. “You like it on your knees for me, cuore mio?” He slipped his hand between my thighs, covering my own with it.

“Mmmhmm,” was all I could manage.

“You suck me like a goddamn dream. So greedy for this dick down your throat. And I’m *gone for you*.” He tugged at the roots of my hair, tipping my head back to look me in the eye. Even through hazy vision, the gold flecks around the edges of his irises made my stomach dip. He was beautiful. “You take every inch of me like a fucking goddess and beg for more,” he continued. “So good to me. Such a perfect fucking mouth. Waiting so patiently for your own turn to come. *Only* thinking of me…”

“Always thinking of you,” I mumbled, almost incoherently. “*Mmm… just love you. Mine*.” On the cusp of an orgasm, the words fell from my mouth. I couldn’t take them back and didn’t want to because they were true.

I loved him even if it didn’t make sense, even if it was batshit fucking crazy.

He stilled for a split second — seemingly caught off guard by what I’d just admitted — then continued the movements of his hand, guiding mine in a torturous rhythm that fucked me all the way up. I was *so* close when he slipped a bit lower and filled my aching cunt with two long, thick fingers, eliciting another *mmph* from my puffy lips.

“...Only thinking of *my* pleasure, all the while *aching* to be filled by me.” He pulled out of me just long enough to slap my hand away, taking over circling my clit with his thumb before thrusting his fingers back inside and stroking them along my upper wall, hitting *all* the right spots. “Practically *dripping* on the floor.”

“*Beck… Fuck*!” I shattered in his arms, my pussy gripping his fingers like a vice.

“There it is, *mmm*,” he growled in my ear. “Ride it, sweet girl. *Show me how fucking good you are*.”

I was limp in his arms, unsure of reality. He lowered me gently to the floor… to the mat, and it vaguely registered to me that we were still in *fucking public*, but I couldn’t find it in me to care.

I felt the heat of his body slink down behind me, pulling my back against his front.

He lifted my top leg and notched his cock at my entrance, pumping into me once before hooking his arm under the bend of my knee and bringing the same hand to my mouth, roughly shoving two fingers inside as he held my neck from the back with his other hand. The calloused skin of his palm grounded me. He jerked my mouth toward him, replacing his fingers with his tongue, as his now free hand slid down to grasp the base of my throat.

He tightened his grip *skillfully*, restricting my airflow as he fucked me slowly.

I was floating, so fucking light. Pressure built behind my eyes and the corners of my vision darkened.

I wanted to die in his arms like this, with his hand around my fucking throat, our bodies twisted together — his very existence sucking the air from my lungs.

I was *his*, and the feeling of him owning my body like this sent me over the edge again.

Hard.

He released his grip at just the right moment, my soul re-entering my trembling body as he slid his hand over my breasts and down my abdomen.

He fucked me harder, rubbing my clit in tight circles. “I… I can’t. Too soon. Too many.” I was a mumbling mess, but I really *couldn’t*. Twice was the limit for one night. I’d never come more than that in one go, and I was honestly afraid of what it might feel like to surpass that.

My body was *spent*.

“One more, baby. Be a good girl and come with me.” And with that, he proved me right the fuck *wrong*.

Molten fucking lava ran hard and fast through my veins, my body arching violently into him as he jerkily thrust into me a final time and filled my pussy with his hot cum.

Our bodies came down from the high in awe-inspiring synchronicity, falling together into a sweaty heap on the gym floor.

I’d never felt more sated.

I rolled onto him, straddling his hips and snuggling my face into the crook of his neck. I kissed his pulse point, savoring the feel of his skin against my lips.

“Still being so sweet for me, love?” *Love*. My heart skipped a beat.

"I think you fucked the everything out of me."

He sat up, taking me with him, and stood in one fluid motion. I clung to him like a baby koala as he carried me out of the main part of the gym. "Think a shower might bring you back down to earth?"

I hummed against the expanse of his throat.

"Let's hope so, pet." He ran his hand over the back of my hair and stilled it at the base of my neck, holding me to him. "Because I am in no way finished with you. So many hours in the night left. So many ways I want to watch you fall apart for me… over and *over* — so pretty when you come, and we have *so* much lost time to make up for."

He backed into a heavy door, pushing it open and bringing us into a slightly cooler room that was brighter than the other and seemed to echo when he spoke. "A hot shower for my girl," he said, leaning into a stall to twist the knob. The spray of water sounded throughout the space, steam filling the air around us. "Then food." He sat me down, holding me steady as I found my balance. My legs were total jello. "Then," he tapped under my chin, bringing my eyes to his. "I'd like to spend the rest of this *date* showing you just how much I fucking love you *too*."

CHAPTER TWENTY

Beck

She’d said she loved me.

I hadn’t expected that at all.

Did she mean it? Or was this just another one of the things people say casually, with no real feeling behind the words?

I didn’t care. I would take whatever she had to offer.

Until tonight, I’d really only thought I could show her the tangled mess of emotions I felt for her with my body. But hearing those words fall from her lips chiseled a huge fucking crack in the granite I carried around in the left side of my chest.

I’d already acknowledged my love for her.

She gave me something special in a moment of vulnerability, so I made the choice to do something I’d never once done in my life.

I made myself vulnerable in return.

Seeing her hand between those gorgeous thighs, her tiny fingers moving over her tight cunt — forced two reactions within me:

One, I almost blew my load down her throat right then and there. I’d never seen anything so fucking sexy in my entire life… not that I’d been looking before now.

The fact that she was turned on by getting me off? Everything.

And two, every fiber of my being screamed at me that I should be the one to make her come.

First and hard.

And then again and again.

I reacted viscerally, just as I did to any other need I’d ever felt.

And fuck… the way she melted into my body and fell apart at the seams.

All for me.

She was borderline incoherent, and getting her to that point made me fucking high.

Made me want to see just how many times I could tear her body apart and put it back together, only to do it all again.

I was officially addicted.

She'd needed this from me so much sooner than now, but regardless of what it took to bring me to this point, it was now that I was dying to test both of our capabilities.

I wasn't sure what had brought on the version of TK that she'd presented me with tonight. I loved her like this — my good, sweet girl… truly.

But I wanted her feisty. Feral. Pinned down, writhing, and fucking screaming until her throat was raw.

And if I had to drive her to the edge — death by fucking orgasm – to get her there? Even better.

How was it that most days I wanted to fuck her into submission, and tonight it was as if everything had flipped completely?

There was nothing about her that felt predictable.

I didn't need to figure her out; she could keep me guessing forever and I would play along endlessly.

But no matter her disposition on any given day, there was one constant: I would fuck her into incognizance — whether that meant her falling into a blissed-out trance, or becoming a screaming, writhing mess.

Either option worked for me.

Because I craved every fucking part of her like I craved my next kill.

I wanted all the pieces of her fucked-up soul threaded into my very existence. I wanted what was left of mine threaded into hers.

Droplets of water sluiced over the curves of her breasts as she stood under the spray of the shower, slowly regaining her bearings.

I'd never imagined being jealous of inanimate beads of liquid, but there was a first time for everything.

I crowded her against the cold tile of the shower wall, caging her in with my forearms on either side of her head. My cock hardened against her naked torso, my skin buzzing at every point of contact.

Who was I kidding? My cock had been in a constant state of semi-hard from the moment I first laid eyes on her, apparently making up for years of inactivity.

She popped up on her toes, wrapping her arms around my neck. Leaning against me, she pressed her swollen lips to mine, stroking her tongue over mine with an eagerness that made my knees buckle.

I took a step back, looking down at her small frame. My hands roamed over her, savoring the warmth of her skin radiating through my palms as I grazed the swell of her breasts.

I brushed my fingertips over the tight peaks of her pale pink nipples, pulling a gasp from her sweet mouth.

I groaned at the feeling it produced in my chest, pinching her and tugging gently. She pressed her chest into me, asking for more.

“You like that, love?”

“Yeah,” she all but whispered in response.

I wrapped my arms around her waist, lifting her up until her gorgeous tits were mere inches from my face. The urge to suffocate between them was strong. She curved her body around mine, wrapping her legs tightly around my torso and grinding into me.

That wouldn’t do.

“Needy girl,” I teased, pressing her back hard against the wall and shoving two fingers into her wet heat. I sucked one of her nipples into my mouth, causing her to huff out a tiny breath. “Ready to come for me again so soon?”

She nodded enthusiastically.

Good.

I worked her into a panting mess, finger fucking her roughly against the wall. I alternated between sucking and biting each one of her nipples, loving the feel of her between my lips.

She arched into me, head thrown back in sheer bliss as the rest of her body convulsed in ecstasy.

My cock jerked, and I wondered if I could come from the sight of her orgasm.

She was beautiful like this, writhing on my hand, but I wanted her screaming.

So I threaded one arm through hers and wrapped my hand around the top of her shoulder, guiding her onto my throbbing cock.

I filled her slowly, stretching her inch by inch.

“Feeling you stretched around my cock is my new favorite addiction,” I groaned. “One of them, anyway.”

“What’s the other?” She panted, grunting at the end of her question as I jerked her down onto me. The sounds she made were both adorable and so fucking sexy; her tiny moans had permanently embedded themselves into my fractured psyche.

I dragged my tongue along the column of her throat, nipping at her chin once I reached it. “Anything that ends with you coming for me.” I pecked her lips twice in quick succession. I couldn’t get enough. “I just want to make you feel so good,” I murmured against her mouth.

Wordless, her head lolled back, hanging limply as I fucked into her. My girl was lost in it, riding the waves. “Goddamn, you feel so good, baby.” I quickened my pace, chasing my own release. “This pussy exists for me to fuck it.” I pulled her roughly down onto me and thrust myself into her, pinching her clit as I pumped her full of everything I had.

Her head snapped forward, our lips colliding as she moaned into my mouth.

I wanted to swallow her whole.

The water beat down around us, the temperature of it dropping with each passing second.

I cut the water off and carried her out into the locker room. With my free hand, I grabbed a clean towel from the shelf outside the showers. Her wet skin slid against mine as I lowered her onto the wooden bench near the door. “Let’s get you dried off.”

I ran the thick towel over her damp, dark hair in long strokes before gently drying her face. The faint smell of bleach clung to the fabric. I worked my way down her body, passing from shoulder to shoulder and then around each breast and across her back. I moved down further, dragging it across her abdomen until I was on my knees using both hands to dry her legs from ankle to thigh.

I tapped the inside of her knee. “Spread your legs, baby.”

She leaned back on her hands, allowing her thighs to fall open for me.

I had fully intended on drying her off, grabbing her clothes, helping her dress, and leaving to go get food.

In that order, no side tasks. I knew she must be hungry.

My mouth had other plans.

I leaned forward, lapping at her swollen pussy, gently pulling her clit into my mouth. She squirmed against me, but I grabbed her by the ass with both hands, holding her firmly in place.

“*Beck*. Please.”

I wasn’t sure if that was a cry for me to make her come again, or her way of begging me to give her a break.

I eased my index finger gently inside her, stroking in and out as I continued assaulting her exhausted cunt with my teeth and tongue. “Mmm,” I hummed against her. “Relax, baby.”

I felt her go lax, and immediately tense again, “I c-ca..” her words cut off with an ear-splitting scream.

Fucking finally. Music to my ears.

Once she came down, I helped her to her feet and tugged my extra t-shirt over her head. It was soft and lightweight and I knew she'd be more comfortable in it than the shirt she'd worn tonight.

"Hungry, love?" I asked.

"So hungry, you insatiable sex demon," She replied, her hand squeezing my bicep playfully. "Mmmm... we need milkshakes."

"A peanut butter milkshake sounds fucking amazing right now," I said, thinking of my favorite place just by LC.

"Yeah, and cheeseburgers." I opened the car door for her and stepped back to let her climb inside.

As I rounded to my own side of the car, I couldn't help but smirk. She was so damn cute.

I wanted to feed her the biggest fucking cheeseburger I could find and get her home where she belonged - in my bed.

My cock jerked in my shorts, liking that idea a little too much given the circumstances.

I took my seat behind the wheel, my eyes tracing the lines of her face, illuminated by the soft glow of the street light shining in through the car window. My heart skipped a beat.

Great, I was having palpitations now. Falling in love was fucking disconcerting.

She noticed me staring and quirked an eyebrow in silent question. I responded by reaching out to her and pulling her onto my lap. She squealed hoarsely.

Fuck, that sounded nice.

"Wanna earn your meal, cuore mio?" I asked.

She looked at me like I was insane. I was. "You don't think I've earned it already?" She asked, almost dumbfounded.

I huffed a small laugh, letting her know that I was half-joking.

I’d feed her any hour of the day, and give her anything she wanted without asking for anything in return.

But I was obsessed, and apparently now making excuses for it.

I brushed her wet hair off of her shoulder and laid a line of kisses down the side of her neck. "You have," I said, running my fingers along the inside of her waistband. "But I think you can give me one more."

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Beck

I was in the middle of a particularly bloody job when my phone rang. Ijah had known I was busy. He never called while I was working, so when I saw his name flash across the screen, I knew it must be important.

I typically favored the neatness that came with my preferred means of ending someone, but there were always occasions in which torture was the name of the game. I was being paid handsomely for it, so who was I to deny the request?

Not that I could have if I'd wanted to.

I was covered in blood, sticky and wet. It dripped from the tips of my fingers and mingled with the pools of red puddled at my feet.

The scent of death was thick in the air and had settled itself somewhere near the back of my throat.

I scrubbed my hands on my jeans as best I could and took the call.

He'd asked me to finish up as quickly as possible and come into the office immediately after.

Typically, this wouldn't have caused any alarm bells to sound for me, but there was a hint of concern in his voice and my gut told me it had something to do with a certain detective.

The mess I'd just made was no easy cleanup, so I opted for a method I didn't often reach for.

I needed to be quick — tossing a match on the scene seemed to be the best option.

In truth, committing arson always left me with a satisfied feeling in my chest, and it was effective. If the impact was severe, bones and teeth would be all that was left, making the victim nearly impossible to properly identify.

Even more so if you took the teeth with you.

And I always made sure the impact was extreme.

Once I'd finished, I went into the office expecting the worst and was still completely caught off guard by what Ijah had to show me.

I stared at the screen, eyes wide and heart pounding. Ijah's finger hovered for a beat before clicking to pause the video, the click seeming louder than it should have been, consequently filling the room with a deafening silence.

My vision tunneled.

"You wanna explain to me what the fuck?" Ijah asked, glaring in my direction, burning a hole through my quickly deteriorating composure.

"Shit." A haze crept in, thickly blanketing my senses.

"What's going on, Beck? What have you been keeping from me?" I could tell he was pissed. It was dangerous for either of us to keep things from one another, but I'd been trying to protect TK to the best of my ability and it just seemed like the fewer people who knew how we met, the better.

"Just. Give me a second." I plopped down into a seat, the images from the screen assaulting my mind like some fucked up rapid-fire cinematic experience.

TK eating alone on her lunch break, unaware of Detective Carson eyeing her from several tables over.

TK finishing her meal, leaving the table to clock back in for the rest of her work day.

The look in Carson's eyes when her table was left unattended.

Carson making a beeline to the bathroom, snatching TK's straw from her drink and pocketing it on the way by.

Fuck.

This couldn't be happening.

I wouldn't let it.

Ijah would help me. He had to.

Realizing now that I should have told him everything sooner, I spilled my guts.

"Fuck." He scrubbed a hand over his face. "I should've known it was something like this with the ways you're head over heels for someone right out of fucking nowhere. Of course, she’s just as fucked in the head as the rest of us.”

“What do I do now?” I willed my hands to not shake. I felt desperate.

Ijah sat silently in contemplation. Each second that ticked by set me more on edge.

He had a way of keeping his cool when everything went to shit that rivaled my own ability to do the same, especially now.

The urge to scream at him to speak — to say anything — bubbled up in my throat.

I slammed my hand hard onto his desk, the sound reverberating around the room.

He didn’t react, only looked at me seriously. “I’ll call Mattia. I don’t know that he will agree to set her up at the safe house or do anything to help, but if you’ll allow me to explain the entire situation to Hunt, I think she would be more than willing to help convince him.”

“Why do you think that?” Hunter and I had barely spoken two words to one another in the years I’d known her. She had no reason to want to help me. Though, she may be willing to help as a favor to Ijah.

“She has a weak spot for tragic love stories,” he smirked.

He would know. I fought the urge to roll my eyes at how ingenuous he could be.

“Fine. Tell her everything. I don’t care. I just need to keep TK hidden long enough to give me time to figure out what to do about this long-term. A few days at most,” I said, closing my eyes and rubbing my temples in a circular motion to try and ease the tension I now held there.

I shoved down the feelings of franticness that threatened to overcome my thought processes. I had to clear my head. I needed to figure this out.

“I’ll make a few calls. One of them being to your girl. Never thought this would be how our first boss/employee check-in would go.” He released a long breath, standing and pulling his phone from his pocket.

His fingers ran over the screen.

“Wait,” I said, my mind finally catching up to the sequence of events. “How did you even notice this on the footage?” I asked. “What made you think anything of it?”

His focus left his phone and he dragged his eyes to my face. “Shit. I almost forgot.” At least I wasn’t the only one slightly addled.

Though, it was more than just slightly for me.

He slumped back in his chair, fingers drumming incessantly on the corner of his desk.

I wanted to snap each one of them to stop the sound of it.

I clenched my teeth.

His eyes were fixed intently on the screen as he scrolled through a video clip, and he gestured, indicating for me to come see.

But once he clicked play, I didn't need to see anything. I would have recognized that voice anywhere. Something inside me recoiled at the pitch of it.

It wasn't made common knowledge to the employees at LC that our surveillance also records audio. You'd think the thought would cross their mind considering the particular environment they work in every day, but it was actually astonishing the number of times we'd gone through footage and come across an employee saying shit that would eventually cost them a lot more than they'd anticipated.

And it almost always involved someone being hard up for cash, willing to do some sketchy, desperate shit for a little money.

Detective Carson was obviously a bit of a dirty cop.

Motherfucker.

Prying at LC, offering money to one of our employees in exchange for information on things happening after hours here… I didn't know what he thought he'd get out of sticking his nose in Mattia's business, but I already knew I would have had to kill him for that alone.

The fact that he was involved with TK in the way that he was only placed him higher on my list of priorities.

"Pause it, I don't need to hear anymore," I told him. "I'll take care of both."

Ijah nodded once, closing the screen and pulling his phone out again. "I know you'll enjoy every minute of it."

Damn right, I would.

I was lost in my thoughts contemplating all the satisfying ways I would get this particular job done for Ijah — for TK — when he ended his last call.

"Hunt said not to worry about Mattia. He's out of town until this weekend, so she's just hanging out up there alone. She said she'd love the company and she'd deal with filling him in when he calls to check in later tonight."

"And TK?" I asked.

"I asked her to come in early for her shift. I didn't want to give too many details over the phone. It's best to just tell her in person."

I liked that I would be able to be present. She was so unpredictable, who knew how she'd react to this?

Whatever she felt, I wanted to be there to reassure her that I would take care of her.

Always.

Whatever it took.

I knew what the end game was for Detective Carson, but I was certain that it was already too late to stop him from matching the DNA samples.

Regardless, his breaths were numbered.

And then I would figure out the rest.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

TK

The drive upstate was exhausting.

Not that it was much of a drive. Maybe, two hours at most? I was just drained… mentally and physically.

I pressed into Beck, lying my head on his shoulder in the back seat of Ijah’s SUV as the winding Adirondack Mountains came into view. They were breathtaking.

Too bad I wouldn’t be able to fucking enjoy them.

“Are you sure I’ll be okay out here? It’s really not that far away.” To say that I was freaking out would have been a major understatement, but I was doing my best to keep my shit together. I didn’t want Beck to think I didn’t trust him.

I did.

It was just that our current situation seemed pretty impossible for anyone to find a way out of.

“The cabin is totally secluded and secure. There’s no place safer for you to disappear to. At least not this close to me, and I’m not willing to take you far.” He ran his chin and cheek over the top of my head. “There are very few people who even know this place is out here, and none of them have any interest in being on the right side of the law.”

I sighed, still not totally sure.

Ijah’s eyes found us in the rearview mirror. “You’ll be fine here. You can relax for at least a few days while we figure everything else out. Mattia spares no expense when it comes to the safety of his wife.” He sounded bitter about that. “He’s kept her locked away like fucking Rapunzel over the last few weeks. Totally paranoid.”

Relax. Yeah, right.

I guessed Mattia did have a lot to be paranoid about, though. I would want to keep my significant other as safe as possible too if I were running some kind of criminal empire.

We rode the rest of the way mostly in silence, my anxiety fighting to get the better of me. Beck spent his time stroking random parts of my body in what I was sure he meant to be reassuring pets… my pussy seemed to have a mind of her own, but now was really not the time.

It was early evening when we arrived, and when the cabin finally came into view, the tension in my body eased a small amount.

Beck and Ijah had been right. The place was a fucking fortress.

There was a tall fence held up by solid metal posts. Ijah drove the SUV up to the entrance and the gate shifted open with a loud clunk, revealing a biometric scanner embedded in the post. While I was impressed by all the high-tech security measures, it was the extras that caught my eye — barbed wire around the tops of each section of fence and barred windows on all sides of the massive house.

Rapunzel, indeed.

A woman, who I assumed was Hunter, stood in the doorway as we pulled around the circle drive.

She had gorgeous long red hair, and she looked vaguely familiar but I couldn't place her face. If we'd met before, I think I would have remembered because she was absolutely stunning.

Ijah took the lead. It didn't escape my notice that when he swept past her, his hand flexed as if he might reach out and touch her, but then thought better of it. Suspish.

Beck placed his hand on the small of my back and led me through the door.

“Hey, roomie,” Hunt said, pulling me into a bear hug that totally caught me off guard.

I awkwardly patted her back. “Hey, uh…” What does one say to the person giving you a safe place to hide when you're about to be added to a most wanted list? “Thanks for letting me stay here for a few days.”

“No problem at all, love. I'll take good care of you while these guys figure things out.” She pulled away from me and patted Beck's arm, giving him a tight smile.

She turned to Ijah. “Could you show them up to the first guest room on the left while I get some things I have for TK?” He turned toward the stairs without responding, the tension between them palpable.

He led us up the stairs, seemingly knowing his way around the place.

“I’ll let you two say your goodbyes,” Ijah said, leaving us alone once we reached my new quarters.

The room was super cozy, with old hardwood floors and a fireplace surrounded by cushy armchairs. A plush throw blanket was draped over the end of the bed, a stack of books waiting on the nightstand. I thought I spotted a shirtless man cover on top. Upon further inspection, he was only half shirtless — still definitely a romance novel. If I had to be stuck somewhere, I guess I could be glad it was here.

Beck released a long breath. “Let’s get you settled in,” he said, plopping my overnight bag down onto the bed.

He took his time removing each item of clothing and sorting them into neat stacks before placing them in drawers.

“You know, I’m only going to be here for a few days. That’s really not necessary,” I told him.

He turned to me, his eyes roving over me. “I know. If I don’t just… do something I’m going to lose it even more than I already am.”

I nodded, feeling a pang of sadness. Despite the safety of the cabin, I was still worried about what the future held for me.

For us.

He looked at me kind of bleakly. “It’ll be okay,” he said quietly, almost as if he was uncertain.

I was trying to be strong, but the dread was overwhelming.

Something like recognition flashed in his eyes, perhaps at the amount of struggle I was currently dealing with internally.

He sat down on the edge of the bed and crooked his finger at me, his demeanor now dripping with sex.

His hazel eyes ran along the length of me, heating me from the inside out.

I hesitated, my racing mind at war with my body’s visceral reaction to him.

“Now, cuore mio.” His tone brokered no argument.

I slid down onto his lap, relishing the way his arms snaked around me. The tension I’d been holding melted away, his skin on mine was the hit of oxytocin I needed to pull me out of my downward mental spiral.

He brushed my hair over my shoulder, laying a hot line of kisses down my neck and over the length of my collarbone. “You’re practically vibrating with unsettled energy,” he said, his lips never leaving my skin. “Need a distraction?”

I hummed, laying my head against his shoulder as his hand skimmed up my thigh to the hem of my loose shorts. My breath caught in my throat when his fingertips gently parted my wet pussy. “No panties?” He raised his eyebrows at me.

“I may as well be comfortable for the remainder of my numbered days of freedom,” I said sardonically.

He scoffed, rubbing slow circles over my clit with his thumb. “Hmmm… tell me another one of your dirty little fantasies I can bring to life once this is all behind us. It’ll give me something to think about while we’re apart.”

I wavered, provoking him to shove three fingers inside me. “Ungh. Beck. Someone could hear us.” My eyes flitted to the door. Ijah hadn’t even closed it all the way.

“Then be quiet for me, baby.”

Yeah… that really did it for me.

“Tell me something…” he insisted. “...and I’ll make you come.”

I considered, already drunk on the way he was touching me. “I… mmm… want you to fuck me while I’m sleeping. Wanna wake up with your cum leaking out of me.” I groaned at the thought. “The idea of you using me like that… but I’m such a light sleeper.”

His cock jerked against my thigh. Evidently, he liked the thought of it too.

“Sounds like a challenge, cuore mio.” The strokes of his fingers were maddening and I was quickly finding my way over the edge. “Maybe I’ll drug you. Video it and text it to you, so you can watch it when you wake up dripping and confused as to why I’m not there.”

A shuddering breath forced its way past my lips and I came hard and fast. My body coiled tightly, my legs shaking almost violently as I clenched around Beck's fingers.

“That’s it, baby,” Beck talked me through it. “Such a good girl.”

This man would be the death of me, and I would gladly fall into his darkness when the time came.

"I'll come back as soon as I can," he said, breaking our brief silence.

"I don't want you to leave," I admitted, laying my head on his shoulder.

"I don't want to leave either, but you have to let me go so I can take care of you, okay?"

I knew he was right, but it fucking sucked.

It all fucking sucked.

He pulled me close, his hands pressed firmly against my back. His lips grazed my forehead and then he cupped my face in his calloused hands, looking hard into my eyes before kissing me softly on the lips.

We said our I love yous and goodbyes and I pulled myself reluctantly away from him.

I watched him go, my gut pinching at the thought of his absence. I knew it was for the best and that I would be safe here, but it was still hard to be here without him. Especially after the last several days of being with him near constantly.

I fell back onto the bed, listening to the sound of the wind outside my barred window.

I would rest in the fact that I was untouchable.

For now.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Beck

SONG: CUSTER BY SLIPKNOT

I woke up the next day with a dull ache in my chest. I instinctively reached out to TK's side of the bed, only to find only the smooth chill of cold sheets and empty space.

I promised her that I would do whatever it took, but at this point, I had very few ideas.

And the ideas I did have were very much not ideal.

I wanted to consider all the options before resorting to anything outlandish, but time was not on our side with this one.

Driving always seemed to be the thing that cleared my mind. The steady motion and the repetitive sounds. Rubber on asphalt had a way of settling anything that plagued me, helping me think things through and rearrange my thought processes.

I let out a heavy sigh and forced myself out of bed. I grabbed a faded pair of jeans from my closet and chose a worn black t-shirt with rips in the sleeves. As I dressed, I felt the weight of the days ahead settle in my bones.

I looked in my bathroom mirror, my eyes searching for an answer and coming up short, so I headed out of my apartment and down to my car.

I drove out of town, simply wanting to be far away from Fate Trace — far away from the suffocating prospect of my entire world crashing down around me.

My plan for clearing my mind seemed to have the opposite effect than usual. The further I drove, the more I vibrated with unspent rage.

I found a quiet spot near the lake and put my car in park, cracking my neck and taking a deep breath. I didn't remember most of the drive and wasn't entirely sure how I actually ended up in this particular spot.

The cabin wasn't actually that far from here, but I wanted to have some semblance of an update for TK before I went back to her. I was dying to see her, to touch her. But I couldn't.

Not yet.

My mind reeled with the possibilities. Taking her somewhere far away from here didn't seem good enough — drastic enough. She needed to be free, to be able to live without this hanging over her head for the rest of our lives together, waiting for the other shoe to drop.

Was I even capable of being the one to protect her? Being the one to give her what she needs and deserves?

I sat motionlessly in my car, time blurring as each second crept past. Only the sound of the engine ticking as it cooled registered faintly in my mind. As if on cue, the slight sound of music reached me, steadily growing louder until it was so close that I could no longer ignore it.

A car had parked a short length away from me, unaware of my presence. The barely intelligible words of the song floated out over the lake and filled the short distance between us in the still morning air.

His obliviousness likely stemmed from the fact that we were in the middle of absolute nowhere — both of us presumably expecting to be the only ones present for our respective mid-morning rendezvous.

I realized then, an ignorant warm body having ambled right into my murderous presence, exactly what it was that I needed to set my mind at ease.

Blood.

Without thinking, I yanked my keys from the ignition, shoving them into my pocket and popping the trunk before getting out of the car.

My clubs were in the back… and I was about to act on an impulse I'd resisted for years now.

I pulled my favorite one from my bag and slammed the trunk, making my way toward the man's car.

His head lay back against the headrest, eyes closed as if he were asleep despite the blaring music. He was likely high, which meant that this would be a lot less fun for me — no fight — but that didn't change much.

My eyes roved over his still form, catching on the tourniquet still tied tightly around his arm and the needle dangling from the bend, still embedded in his flesh.

I knew what it felt like to be addicted, a slave to your own needs.

We had that in common, but there was one difference: Today, he would be set free.

And me? I would walk away with my chains still fully intact, assuaged for the time being.

I opened his car door and slid into the back seat, maneuvering my club between the two front seats in a way that allowed me to slip one end quickly around his front, grabbing it with my other and barring it tightly around his neck.

He roused then, the cold bite of metal bringing him back to consciousness. I didn't allow him a chance to attempt to speak, pulling the club so tightly against his windpipe that it crunched under the pressure. After only a moment of him struggling against me, his body wilted in the front seat.

I climbed out, then opened his door and jerked his body to the ground. The music blared even louder with the doors open, some nu metal band that I didn't recognize, but the lyrics were fitting for such activities.

I reached into the car and turned the sound louder.

I had no idea if this particular victim deserved this end, but I couldn't find it in me to care.

I raised the club over my head and brought the head down hard on his face with a sickening crack. I felt a surge of power as splinters of bone flew, followed by the sticky spray of blood that coated the lower half of my jeans. I struck him again and again, each blow harder than the last, until all that was left was an unrecognizable bloody pulp.

I walked away, removing my shirt, and using it to wipe the clubhead clean before shoving the iron back into my bag.

I drove away from the scene, not caring enough to deal with the body. Someone else could do it this time.

I needed a shower, a change of clothes, and my girl.

Luckily, I could find all three under the same roof.

The car hummed steadily as I drove down the winding road leading away from the lake. The trees grew denser until I came upon the fork in the road. I took the right turn, gravel crunching beneath my tires, and followed the winding path for a while longer until I could just make out the silhouette of the massive wooden cabin tucked away among the trees.

While I couldn't share with her yet what I'd just come up with, I could fuck her boneless and get the things done here that I needed to do before taking the next steps.

Two birds with one stone, if you will.

I would need to work out the finer details. I knew Law could get what I needed to get the job done, and he would be more than willing to acquaint me with his own methods.

What I had in mind was uncharted territory, but I’d accepted now that it was the only answer.

I couldn’t bear to see my girl locked away.

She deserved to be free, and if there was one thing I’d been reminded of today it was that there was freedom in death.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

TK

Aside from Hunt dropping a basket of snacks and other necessities by my room the evening before, I hadn't actually interacted with her very much in the short time I'd been a guest in her home.

I'd been alone in my new room for several hours when I finally decided to drag myself out of bed and better acquaint myself with my new friend.

I hoped we'd be friends, anyway. She seemed really nice and I was thankful that she was willing to put herself out there for me in this way. It was not a small gesture, that was for sure.

I hadn't expected her to be so… young. I hadn't met Mattia to know what he looked like, but in my mind, I'd imagined him to be old. I just didn't think it was super typical for anyone in their twenties to be the top dog of a fairly large and well-known crime syndicate.

Maybe they had an age gap thing going on.

I mean, I definitely understood what it was like to find yourself attracted to a dangerous man. It's unnerving how little control I've had over my own responses to Beck from the very beginning. I don't think his age or any other circumstances would have changed the way I was drawn to him.

It was just him.

I'll admit that I was a little pissed that I hadn't heard from him much since he left me here, but I knew that I needed to try and be patient with him right now.

I stepped out into the hallway, nervously taking in my surroundings. This was truly not your average cabin… if you could even call it that.

Sure, it had the looks and cozy feel of a gigantic mountain home owned by some rich fuck with more money than marbles, but ultimately the place was a fucking fortress.

I glanced down the stairs, unsure of where to find my generous host, when I heard the faint sound of some very emo alternative music coming from the kitchen.

Yeah, we were totally going to be friends.

I headed in the direction of it and found Hunt there, dancing and humming along while chopping fruit and tossing the pieces into a bowl.

Her long red hair hung in loose tendrils around her face, and when she caught sight of me, she all but jumped out of her skin.

“Shit!” She gasped, her hand going to her chest like my sudden presence had brought on cardiac arrhythmia.

I knew the feeling well, my heart had been pretty sensitive to outside forces lately. I frequently found it trying to fuck right off out of my chest if I thought too hard about much of anything in my life the last few days.

“I *so* did not mean to scare you,” I said, rounding the counter and sidling up next to her on a bar stool. “I was just all in my head up in my room and needed to get out. Can I help?” I offered.

“Sure.” She opened a drawer and pulled out an extra cutting board, grabbed a knife from the block on the countertop, and slid both toward me once I’d finished washing my hands. “Sorry for not popping back up to check on you sooner. I’m so used to being here alone all the time. Not to mention that I will typically have one thing in mind and end up totally distracted doing something else before actually getting to the first thing.” I fully understood that. She scooted an untouched pineapple toward me. “This is for you, by the way.” She pointed to the product of her hard work with the end of her knife before hacking into the flesh of a mango.

I’d never cut a pineapple before, but I didn’t think it would be super hard to figure out how. I placed it upright on my cutting board, then tilted it onto its side and hacked off the top, eyeing the massive bowl of mixed fruits. “Looks amazing, but I’m really not so sure I can eat all of that by myself,” I laughed.

She tossed a handful of mango cubes into the bowl and considered. “Yeah. Probably overkill.” She shrugged. “I don’t have very many guests over, but I figured I should probably feed you something.”

“Fruit is actually perfect,” I reassured her. The pineapple skin was surprisingly thick. I pressed down with the knife, bearing my weight on it as I carefully sliced away the waxy outer part. “My ADHD meds leave me without much of an appetite, so I have to basically force myself to snack throughout the day. This kind of thing is my go-to, and it's a huge bonus that it's already chopped up and ready to go." I cut the yellow center into quarters and then cut each quarter into smaller wedges before dropping them into the bowl.

Hunt grinned, her eyes lighting up a little. "Big same." She rinsed the sticky fruit juices from her hands under the faucet and dried them with a kitchen towel before tossing it to me so I could do the same. "Literally couldn't come up with much else in a pinch because I hyperfixate on foods for weeks at a time, and lately it's been fruit."

"Good. Then we can share," I smiled. It was nice meeting someone who could relate.

I suspected there were other things about her that I would find relatable as well. I was anxious to have someone to talk to about Beck, especially since Andi had proven herself to not be such a dependable friend after all.

I let my thoughts wander a bit. If Andi would have just come to me, I would've found a way to help her. But I guess we didn't really know one another well enough for her to trust me, and it seemed like whatever she needed money for was big, given the lengths she'd gone to to get it. It could have been any number of things.

I would likely never fully know what she'd gotten herself into, I just hoped that she found a way out. I wasn't really in the position to do much to help her at this point, anyway.

The sound of Hunt opening the door of a stainless steel wine fridge under the counter brought me back to reality. She looked over the labels and settled on a bottle of Sauvignon Blanc. She pulled it out and sat it carefully on the counter. From an upper cabinet, she grabbed two stemmed glasses before pouring a generous amount into each and passing one over to me.

She took a small drink of her own and popped a pitted cherry into her mouth. "While the circumstances seriously suck, I'm glad you're here," she said genuinely.

I forced a tight smile. It couldn't be easy for her to be so cut off from the rest of the world, stuck in the mountains with no one to talk to for days on end. "Me too," I replied, and I meant it. I was glad we were both safe. "It'll all work out. I mean, I would be lying if I said I wasn't scared, but at the end of the day, I really do trust Beck to come up with the best solution. He's been dealing with shit like this for a long time."

She hummed, chewing another small hunk of fruit. “It must be nice to feel so cared about. I really do hope the best for you both.”

She didn’t feel cared about? Mattia had basically locked her up on house arrest to keep her safe from something like this happening to her. It was so much easier to get tangled up in the dangers of what his world had to offer than a person would think.

I thought of Andi again.

I couldn’t imagine all the threats to Hunt’s safety, knowing who she was married to. “Your husband seems to care about you,” I noted hesitantly. “Just look at this place.” I gestured around the room.

She scoffed. “Yeah. A literal fucking prison. I just want to be free… to live my life and be normal. And while I’m safe from the outside world, I am most definitely not safe from Mattia.”

I tensed at her bluntness. I’d apparently struck a nerve, but I was nothing if not nosy. “How do you mean?”

Her eyes searched my face, perhaps wondering if she could trust me and then deciding to go for it. “I didn’t ask for any of this. Not this house, not this life… not my husband. But all debts need to be paid and apparently, my father isn’t above handing over ‘his hot piece of ass daughter’ to the highest bidder in order to cover his own.” She drained the rest of her wine. “And as far as how safe I am, I’m Mattia’s favorite punching bag when he decides he needs to pop in and let off some steam. I dream of slitting his throat in his sleep. And he knows it.”

I wanted to comfort her in some way but came up short. “Why don’t you, then?” I asked seriously, raising one eyebrow.

“Yeah. Right. That would likely land me in an even worse scenario than the one I’m already in.”

I accepted her response. She knew more about her own situation than I ever would, but I silently vowed to find a way to get her out of it.

I smirked to myself. Beck would love that.

She scraped the stem of the glass on either side with thumbnails, staring into the emptiness of it as if it had some semblance of an answer for her. She huffed out a breath and changed the subject. “I was going to ask how you got involved with someone like Beck, but I guess I already know the answer to that,” she paused. “I suck at small talk.”

I let out a small laugh. “Me too.”

We sat in silence for a moment before she said, “How do you trust him with this? I mean, I’m not saying that you shouldn’t. I don’t know him or you or anything about what’s between the two of you. But any of the men who work for my husband… they’re ruthless. And I’ve never known even the best of them to care about anyone but themselves.”

She wasn’t wrong to question me about this. A lot of the time I wasn’t really sure myself. “I think we’re fated mates or some shit,” I said thoughtfully, only half joking.

She burst into laughter, causing me to laugh too. “I think we’re probably into the same kind of reading material as well,” she giggled.

“So much in common,” I laughed again, then sobered, thinking of my guy. “But seriously. Isn’t that how it is though? We go through life, spending our time and energy on all the wrong things and people until somehow the one thing —- the one person —- just clicks. And that’s that.” I shrugged one shoulder.

“I wouldn’t really know,” she mumbled kind of sadly.

I placed my hand on her forearm. “I think it’s like that with friends too,” I said.

She scrunched up her nose, smiling again. “Maybe it is.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Beck

I felt the first wave of relief wash over me as the gate clunked open for me to pass through.

My mind struggled to keep up with the constantly changing emotions I felt in the wake of all that had happened over the last few days.

When TK came into view, something settled inside me — a fucked-up mixture of joy and rage.

I knew what needed to be done and I was prepared to do it, but I needed this first.

Her.

Once we were both sated, I would set the first part of my plan into motion.

She bounded down the front steps and jumped into my arms, uncaring that I was shirtless, sweaty, and covered in blood.

Her warmth against my skin and weight in my arms further soothed the festering anger in the pit of my stomach that I needed to hold onto in regard to my plans for Detective Carson.

I allowed it to coil there, waiting to be released.

I took a deep breath and forced myself to focus on what was in front of me.

One thing at a time.

"You're back soon," TK observed, pulling away from me and finally taking in my appearance.

"I had something to take care of nearby and could use a shower." I looked down at myself. It wasn't necessarily a lie. "I also just wanted an excuse to see you," I added.

She smiled up at me, though something was off about it. “I think I can help with that,” she said suggestively.

I couldn’t stop myself from grinning back. Fuck, she had a way of melting me.

She led me through the main area of the cabin, pausing to speak to Hunt, who sat at the island in the kitchen picking at a bowl of fruit. “Beck needs a shower.”

“I… can see that,” Hunt replied with a disgusted look on her face.

I knew good and damn well that I wasn’t the first person she’d seen in this state, but I supposed that didn’t make it any less repulsive to most people.

“I’ll grab you a fresh change of clothes and leave them on TK’s bed, then. You can use the shower in her room.”

“Thanks!” TK chirped, pulling me by the hand toward the stairs.

“Oh, and Beck,” Hunt called. “If you think you’ll be visiting fairly often, you two come find me before you leave so I can give you temporary security access.”

I nodded once before turning to follow TK, hoping that I’d masked exactly how eager I was to do just what she’d suggested.

I hadn’t expected it to be so easy, but the first thing I’d needed to do in order to follow through with my plan over the next few days had just effortlessly fallen into my lap.

Fate.

Things have a way of working out when you’re on the right path.

Entering her bathroom, I peeled off my remaining clothing and dropped them in a heap into the trash bin, then stepped into the shower. Warm steam enveloped me as I slowly scrubbed away the sweat, dirt, and dried blood.

TK sat perched on the counter between the double sinks, watching me intently.

“No interest in showering with me this time, cuore mio?” I asked, not bothering to look her way as I washed my thick, wavy hair.

“Meh.”

My eyes popped open. I glared at her through the steam. “Meh?” What the fuck was she playing at?

She shrugged. “I’m good over here.” Her eyes roved over my body.

“Well, I’m not good with you over there,” I said.

“Sounds like a you problem.”

I thought back over the time since I’d left her here and realized I’d only called to check in once. Of course, she was being a brat right now.

“TK,” she jerked as if I’d slapped her at my casual use of her actual name. “Get in the shower.”

“T*K?*”

“I won’t repeat myself, cuore mio.”

I counted to three in my head.

She still hadn’t budged.

I stepped out from under the hot spray of the shower, beads of water dripping down the hard planes of my body and pooling at my feet as I stalked toward her. My gaze locked onto hers, unflinching — conscious of each step and the way she tensed with anticipation.

I stood in front of her, our faces barely an inch apart, and grabbed a fistful of her hair, pulling her head back forcibly as I leaned in and kissed her hard. She gasped into my mouth, and I tightened my grip on her roots before yanking her to her feet.

“You don’t get to refuse me,” I said onto her lips. “I don’t care how pissed you are about whatever, you do not tell me no.”

“Maybe you should pay more attention to me, then,” she murmured. “You know, aside from only when you want to fuck me.”

I pulled my face back from hers, looking down at her utterly baffled. “You know that’s not true,” I countered.

She shrugged.

“*I love you,*” I told her, looking hard into her eyes. “And I am doing everything I can to protect you and keep you safe right now. I am sorry if my being overwhelmed by all of this has had me more than a little distracted over the last 24 hours, but you should know that I finally have a solid plan in place and I’m here because I need you and can barely stand to be away from you.”

She softened a bit at that. “I love you too.”

“Good,” I replied. “Then stop being such a stubborn bitch and get on your knees.”

She dropped to the floor and opened her mouth, sticking out her tongue like the good fucking girl I knew she could be. My cock throbbed at the sight of her.

Retracting her tongue, she licked her lips. “My mouth is a little dry,” she stated. “I had some wine earlier.”

"Not a problem, love."

I curled my fingers under her chin, pulling her jaw down and tilting her head back. Opening my mouth slightly, I let a line of saliva trickle from between my lips to hers.

The look she gave in return was absolutely feral.

I grabbed the back of her head roughly and thrust my hips forward, pushing my length deep into her throat. Her eyes widened in surprise and she let out a muffled moan as I started to fuck her face with what felt like all of my pent-up aggression.

"Touch yourself," I slowed my thrusts, giving her a small amount of relief. "Make yourself come first so I can finish in that tight little pussy."

She groaned around my dick, the sound reverberating along my spine.

Her hand slipped beneath the waistband of her leggings.

God, she was sexy.

I watched her intensely as she worked her fingers over her clit while taking every fucking inch of me down her throat.

And when she finally brought herself over the edge? I couldn't get her naked fast enough.

"Fuck, you're incredible," I groaned, bringing my hand down hard on her exposed ass as I thrust into her wet heat.

I pounded into her, knowing that it wouldn't take long for me to come like this.

She felt so good.

So right.

Her pussy gripped me tightly, her breaths coming in short gasps. The feel of her hip in the grip of my palm and the sight of the soft arch of her back as I tugged her head back had me spilling into her. I buckled at the waist, the orgasm rocking my entire body.

I bit down on her shoulder, unable to help myself. And when I pulled away, the sight of my mark on her flesh sent a shudder through me.

A mark of ownership, because she was fucking mine.

In this life — and whether she knew it or not — the next.

I wanted eternity.

And I would take it for both of us.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Beck

I pulled in at LC, slammed my car door shut, and bounded up the stairs that led to my second-story apartment. My heavy footsteps echoed against the outside wall as I took the metal steps two at a time.

I expected Law to be waiting there, but when I entered through the side door I found both Law *and* Alec sitting on either side of my kitchen island.

Fucking figured. Those two assholes couldn't go much of anywhere without one another.

"Where's the stuff?" I asked. "I'm kind of on a tight schedule here."

"*Thanks for coming guys*," Alec taunted. "*I'm so appreciative that you're willing to help out on such short notice*."

"Shut the fuck up." I cuffed him on the back of the head as I walked by. I turned to Law.

He unzipped the small black bag he'd placed on the table in front of him. It looked very much like a miniature first aid kit, but I only had two purposes in mind for the contents — neither of which would actually aid the intended recipients.

There was a line of six orange-capped syringes, each held in place by a small band of elastic, and two small vials of clear liquid.

He slid it toward me, pointing to a line on one of the syringes. "Stick the needle into the vial, and pull the plunger back to here if you want them to wake up again." He moved his finger further down and added, "Anywhere past here and you won't have to worry about the extra steps involved with finalizing the job because they'll be as good as dead within a few minutes."

"Where's the fun in that?" I smirked.

“Not all of us get off on the struggle,” he stated plainly. “And most people deserve a peaceful end regardless of what kind of shit situation they found their way into.”

I supposed he was right.

I studied his face, searching for any trace of what he was feeling—there was nothing there. His expression was, as usual, completely unreadable. No matter how long I'd been around him, or how hard I tried to see past his impenetrable outer shell, it had always been impossible to truly know Law.

I wondered if there was anyone who could figure out the enigma that he was if given the chance to try.

I flopped the top back over the contents of the bag and zipped it shut before picking it up and pocketing it. “Thanks,” I said seriously, side-eyeing Alec before he had the chance to make another smart-ass remark. “Really. You have no idea how much easier you just made this for me.”

He nodded his understanding.

Alec spoke up then, “You know this is deranged, right?”

I glared at him. As if we weren’t all deranged.

He rolled his eyes. “More deranged than your usual state of being. Totally unhinged seems more accurate. I just hope you’ve thought this through.”

I had.

And while I’d shared most of the details with the two of them, I opted to leave out a few key points.

Alec truly had no fucking idea just how far off the deep end my girl had sent me.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

TK

A cool brush of air fanned across my face, pulling me from sleep. Someone had opened the door.

I tensed as the soft padding of feet moved closer.

I recognized his gait and exhaled in relief. Beck.

I loved that he couldn't stay away from me for very long.

I wanted to look at him, but I kept my eyes closed and my breathing even, pretending to still be asleep.

I was anxious to see what he had in mind tonight.

He pulled back the thick comforter, the chill of the room prickling against my exposed skin.

Leaning over me, he brushed a few loose strands of hair out of my face and placed a tender kiss on my brow.

I couldn’t fight back the smile that it brought to my lips.

I wanted to curl into him.

My eyes fluttered open at the same moment I felt a sharp sting in my bare thigh.

I didn’t have time to register what had happened before I seemed to lose all control of my body, barely cognizant of what came next.

My vision blurred around the edges and my lungs constricted for a split second, unable to take in a full breath. My hands trembled at my sides, panic settling in the back of my throat at the onslaught of sensations.

He gently swept his hand over my face, closing my eyes. “*Shh*, cuore mio. Let me take care of you. Let me take care of it all.”

I was faintly aware of him sliding my silk sleep shorts over my hips, alternating kisses between each of my legs from thigh to heel as he slowly removed them from my body.

There was a movement to the side and then his body covered mine.

My brain fogged, floating in a state of semi-consciousness threatening to pull me all the way under.

He said something else, but I couldn't make out the words now. It sounded as if I were deep underwater and he was whispering them to me from somewhere just above the surface.

He slipped my panties to the side and ran his long fingers from my entrance to my clit and back, pumping in and out of me a few times.

I groaned.

I think it was me?

There were more unintelligible words.

My eyes flicked open again, taking in the fuzzy outline of him as he stroked his thick cock and then shoved into me.

The first hard thrust loosened whatever hold I had on consciousness.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Beck

I slipped back into the version of me that had become a jumbled mess in the aftermath of the violent storm that was TK.

Her presence in my life had twisted me into a person I hardly recognized.

She clouded my judgment and made me question *everything* about myself.

My newfound conscience could fuck right off.

This held too much importance.

It had to be just right for her. No room for error.

Not this time, or ever again.

I would make it good for her, despite the fact she'd never know.

I couldn't resist fucking her one last time before going full force into a plan I wasn't sure she'd approve of.

As a matter of fact, I was almost certain she *wouldn't*.

But she didn't know what was best for her.

I did.

And the lengths I would go to when it came to her were *boundless*.

I tossed the limp body over my shoulder and banded my forearm across the cold, clammy skin at the bend of her knees, holding her in place.

She was as physically light as I would have expected, but a strange heaviness weighed down on me despite that.

The cabin-style home creaked as I slipped out the back door and stepped onto the wooden porch.

Sweat beaded at my hairline from the minor exertion.

I'd followed Law's instructions exactly.

I had no desire to draw any of this out.

I'd filled the syringe to capacity before pumping her full of the drug.

The thought of hearing her plead for mercy set my teeth on edge — that was never an option, because it was simply something I could not endure.

I dropped her small form into my waiting trunk.

Slamming it shut eased something within me. Shrouding her in darkness was preferable to bearing the weight of her lifeless eyes staring a hole through my tepid sense of right and wrong.

The drive to my girl's apartment felt like a time warp, going by quicker than what seemed realistic. Perhaps because I dreaded what I was about to do.

Deep down, a part of me knew that she would be heartbroken at my decision.

I shoved my feelings on the matter far away.

It was too late now.

I carried the body through her front door and up the stairs, my ragged breathing and heavy footsteps the only sounds. I took a moment to adjust my grip before entering into the main living area.

I settled her tiny frame onto the carpet, trying to be at least somewhat reverent.

Sacrifices were being made, after all.

I quickly retrieved the remainder of what I would need from my car and got to work.

The kitchen was first. I soaked every square inch of it.

I doused the table and chairs, the act physically painful as I thought of the memories this place held for the two of us.

How fucking adorable she'd been with that goddamn sunflower tattoo.

Eating breakfast together — how enamored I'd been with her.

At the top of the stairs, I tipped the container over and emptied the remaining kerosene out like a waterfall, the contents cascading over each step and pooling on the floor at the bottom.

I carried the other jug over to the body, soaking every inch of her.

Her hair, her clothes, her skin — the thick carpet beneath her still form.

I'd made it a quick, easy death… mostly for my own selfish reasons.

But as I walked away from her to saturate the remainder of the house, I marveled at just how beautiful it all actually was.

So simple. *Flawless*.

Just as I'd needed it to be.

Perhaps Law was onto something with this way of doing things.

It was neat. *Clean*.

And I'd done everything *perfectly* for my girl. She deserved no less.

I made my way to exit through the back, sparing the body one last glance before lighting it up.

Although she lived in a townhouse, she only shared a wall with one other neighbor and *he* was long gone. I didn't have to worry about damaging anyone else's home in the process.

I climbed the steep incline of the hillside behind the homes, my boots sinking into the damp grass. I reached the top and collapsed there, a tad breathless. I settled in — a front-row seat to watch it burn.

I'd been thorough. There was no saving it. With the amount of fuel I'd used, it would burn hot and heavy. *Fast*.

Arson was nearly impossible to prove and I'd made sure the point of origin was at the body.

That would burn the longest.

I sat in wonder at myself, at my own abilities.

The sudden overpressure of the air inside the home caused a window to shatter. The blaze flared out the fresh opening and licked up the side of the outer structure.

The unsteady flames made me feel in control again, just as they always had growing up.

The heat was familiar. Comforting.

Before long, sirens blared in the distance. That was my cue to move on.

I had only one thing left to do before my soul could finally be at peace — finally lead me back to her.

Lead me *home*.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Beck

My car shuddered across the parking lot, gravel crunching beneath my tires as I rolled to a gradual stop in front of the old abandoned warehouse. I stepped out into the silence of the night.

Stepping onto the curb, I trudged over the weeds that pushed up through the cracks in the pavement of the sidewalk.

A gift awaited me inside — one that Law and Alec had so graciously delivered while I attended to more delicate matters.

There was nothing delicate about what I would do to Detective Carson once inside.

His naked, abused body hung from the rafters, his shoulders dislocated from the way I knew Alec preferred to tie a victim's hands behind their back before suspending them by a rope attached to their wrists.

He was unconscious from the hours of torment I knew he'd endured, but I would wake him.

I flipped on my electric kettle, the water simmering to life as it heated.

I rounded the raised surface that held my tools, admiring the knives my friends had laid out for me. I ran my hand along the line of them, allowing my fingers to linger on each of the smooth handles. I picked one up, feeling a thrill at the gleam of the blade under the dull fluorescent lighting. The weight of it in my hand gave me a rush of satisfaction.

I would start at his ankles and work my way up to his neck, blistering every square inch of his ruddy flesh so that it peeled easily away from the connective tissue surrounding his weak muscles and flimsy bones.

I shifted my eyes in his direction, curious as to how long I could draw this out being that he was already in rough shape. His thick body swayed from the sheer weight of it tugging at the ropes. The beams creaked, the lights flickering and buzzing in time with the motion.

I reached for the smelling salts, cracking the capsule between my thumb and forefinger while sauntering toward him.

The noxious scent stung my eyes, causing them to water slightly.

I delighted in the way I knew it must feel burning along his nasal passages when I shoved the capsule directly into his left nostril, leaving it there as he sputtered and gagged.

Once he managed to dislodge it, I grabbed my favorite pair of extraction forceps. He held his mouth open as he wailed, likely due to the pain in his arms. This granted me easy access to clamp down on the first available tooth I could reach.

Holding his face still with one hand, I pried the molar free of its home near the back of his mouth, then tucked it into my pocket with the mouthful I already held there. His screams echoed off the walls of the empty room.

"You thought you could get my girl, *Detective?* Put her away for something she was merely present for?" I questioned him.

"Please! God!" He screamed, begging.

"*Shutthefuckup*." I slapped him hard across the face. "No one," I said, jabbing him in the forehead with my index finger for emphasis, "has ever prayed to any god who's been capable of saving them from me."

He sobbed at my words.

Good.

"You thought I would allow you to take her freedom?" I stared down at him, unflinching. The devil incarnate. "You may have set the wheels in motion before I could get to you, but there's one thing you failed to realize. *Freedom* comes in many forms. Unfortunately for you, I'm not quite ready to grant you the ultimate form of yours just yet."

We had a long night ahead of us, Justin and I.

And then, knowing that I'd done all the things my girl would have wanted, I could rest too.

CHAPTER THIRTY

TK

I'd stepped outside my body and into the ether, immersed in what felt like a thick cloud of fog.

I watched the scene unfold from some sort of non-physical plane of existence.

My entire world — all that I’d had, all that I’d known — was up in flames.

The fire raged, consuming everything *so* quickly.

The pungent smell of kerosene invaded my senses.

A wave of heat washed over me and I felt faint at the realization Beck had done this.

I’d trusted him blindly, not fully understanding the lengths he’d been willing to go to until now.

Still, somehow, I couldn’t find it in me to be upset with him for any of it.

Though, I wasn’t entirely sure how he thought *this* fixed anything for me.

Hunt clicked out of the live news feed, and closed the laptop screen, pulling me back to reality and relieving me of my first out-of-body experience.

Shock could do that to a person.

There was something about small-town new stations and their need to live stream *everything*. It was all news to them, even a simple house fire.

“What the fuck was he thinking?” Hunt contemplated out loud.

“I wish I knew,” I admitted, tugging at the ends of my hair.

* * *

I laid in bed for what felt like hours, totally restless after Hunt had woken me with the news. I had been in such a daze, tossing and turning as I struggled to make sense of it all.

I felt almost hungover, like I'd swallowed a mouthful of sand causing my tongue to stick to the roof of my mouth. A throbbing ache beat near the center of the back of my head and just behind my eyes. I kept them glued shut, wishing for nothing more than Beck to come back to me and drive away this godforsaken feeling.

At some point, I found my bearings and noted the wetness pooled between my thighs. Despite my current state of discomfort, a thrill ran through me, recalling how Beck had made time to fulfill one of my wildest fantasies in the midst of all our chaos.

He’d failed to send a video of it like he’d promised. We’d discuss that later.

I was *so* ready to see him again, or to at least hear from him. It was late into the next day at this point and he hadn’t so much as sent me a text letting me know that things were okay.

I would’ve definitely already slipped into brat mode if the circumstances weren’t so dire.

Just as I was beginning to fall into another downward mental spiral, the door to my room clicked open.

My eyes lit up at the sight of him. He looked more at ease than I’d ever seen him and I knew that everything had been taken care of.

I hauled my ass straight into his arms, feeling the warmth of his embrace all the way to my bones as he enveloped me in a much needed hug.

Fuck, I’d missed him. I missed him every single second that we were apart.

He pulled back from me, and I punched him hard in the arm. “You just burnt my fucking house down! All my stuff was in there!”

He rubbed the spot, then led me over to sit side by side on the bed. “Do you really think I’d do that without removing the important shit first? Like I would burn your *books*. I still need the sequel to that sexy man-meat sandwich book of yours. Of course, I had to save *that*.” He leveled me with a stare and I fought back laughter. “I have some other things for you too,” he grinned, waving a thick envelope in front of my face.

I was so excited to see him again, I’d missed that he was holding it. “What is it?” I asked.

He dumped the contents on my bed and I eyed the papers suspiciously.

Birth certificate, social security card, passport…

I picked up the driver’s license, eyes scanning over the small card.

My mouth fell open when I saw my own face in the corner, but none of the information printed on it belonged to me.

Different city, state… *name*.

“*Wolffbrandt?*” I read the last name aloud, a bit in disbelief.

“Yes, cuore mio,” Beck responded, tugging the hard plastic from my hand and replacing it with another form of license. *A marriage license*. “*Wolffbrandt*.”

He tipped my mouth closed, leaning down to place a chaste kiss there.

“I’m so confused,” I told him when he pulled away.

“Let me explain, then… *wife*.” His eyes glinted with mirth. “You’re dead now. The preliminary results of your falsified autopsy will be released to the police sometime in the next 24 hours, by which time you and I will be long gone.”

There was a *body* in my house when it had burned. I should have known.

“Falsified?”

“I’m close friends with the coroner. Not that he had much to go on with what was left of the charred corpse.” He seemed proud of that.

“This is insane.” I really didn’t know how to react to any of this. How was I supposed to just pack up and start a whole new fucking *life?* “We’re *married?*”

He grinned. “As far as I’m concerned.”

It took everything in me not to jump his fucking bones. But I had more questions. “Where are we going?”

“Where do you want to go?” He acted as if it was no big deal — as if the world was our goddamn oyster — when the reality of it was anything *but* that.

I tried to think, but every thought overlapped with another and the inside of my brain was even more of a hot fucking mess than usual. “Oh, my god. I need to dye my hair or something. Tattoos? I should get tattoos. Do we have to leave the country? I don't know if I'm ready to move *abroad*, Beck. Other countries are a whole different world. I'm barely functioning as a productive member of society now, how am I ever going to learn a whole new way of living somewhere else? This is just crazy. Wait. Dexter faked his death. And he just moved north. Maybe we can just move sou…"

He slapped his hand over my mouth, cutting off the flow of my words. They'd spilled out so quickly that another sentence began before I'd ended the previous one.

He pulled me onto his lap, his hand still covering the lower half of my face. "One," he began. "Your last several photos that were made available to the public show you with a gorgeous sleeve tattoo." He traced a pattern over the length of my arm. "A tattoo that is no longer visible on this delectable skin of yours," he noted.

He removed his hand from me and I opened my mouth to speak. "Two," he cut me off abruptly. "Dexter is a *fictional character*, love. This is our real life, so I do think we should at least consider a new country. But we can talk about it, okay?"

"Okay," I said meekly, still very rattled.

"And lastly," he gave me a hard look, running his free hand through my long hair. "You're not fucking touching this gorgeous black mane."

I gave him a small smile, grateful because fuck knew I didn't want to.

"*So*. I guess we're doing this, then."

"We are."

"I don't have much of a life to leave behind, but I have to admit I'll miss my friends. I only just met Hunt, but I really like her, Beck."

"She can visit. We'll work it out."

I remembered my other friend, then. The one I wouldn't be able to explain any of this to. The one who would just go on thinking I was actually *dead*. "Fuck, what about Andi? I'll miss her too and I never had the chance to figure out what was going on with her. What if there was some way I could have helped? I can't just leave her like this."

He hugged me tightly, nudging my head down onto his shoulder. I breathed in the sweet scent of him, my nose grazing his neck as his throat bobbed. "I, uh… made sure she was taken care of," he said.

I relaxed into him. Of course, he did.

He’d taken care of everything, just like I knew he would.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Beck

TK was out cold from our very *thorough* reunion. She needed to rest. I knew she hadn't over the last few days, and we had a long trip ahead of us.

I left her in bed and padded down the stairs in the dark, carrying with me what was left of her belongings. I'd packed them up again and just needed to toss them in the back of the car.

I would leave with her first thing in the morning — we'd settle on our destination as we drove. I couldn't wait to start our new life together.

I was settling the bag down alongside my own things when I felt the cold press of metal against the exposed base of my skull.

A gun.

"You really know how to make a fucking mess of a person's plans," Mattia growled.

What the fuck?

I felt a sharp stab of pain in the side of my neck and I dropped to the ground without another coherent thought.

* * *

I woke… bound.

I was locked up tight in some kind of contraption that, upon further inspection, was some sort of modern-day fucking *guillotine*.

I'd always known Mattia to be excessively bloodthirsty. Hell, it was my *job* to help quench that thirst. But this was another level.

One that I hadn't expected.

And I was clueless as to why I was on the receiving end of it.

A hard kick landed across the left side of my face, nearly knocking me unconscious again. Blood from my mouth spattered across the floor. I was powerless to fight back, and even in my current state all I could think of was that TK was somewhere nearby and if he'd laid a single finger on her while I was out, I would drag him to Hell once I found my way free.

I jerked at the restraints around each of my wrists to no avail. The cold metal bit into my skin harder with each fitful movement, but the thick clasps remained securely in place.

"Fucking *stop*," Mattia spat, torquing my wrist nearest him into an unnatural position. Bone crunched. I refused to react to the pain that shot down my left ulna. I wouldn't give him the satisfaction.

"That's your problem," he continued. "You've never known when to just *fucking stop*. Week by week, you add to your numbers. Disappearances without explanation, random bodies found. You never once stopped to fucking think that in a town as small as Fate Trace, eventually, eyes would naturally turn to *me*." He stabbed himself in the chest with his thumb. "Any shit that goes down around here, I'm always the one to blame. And there's only so much I can keep getting by with."

I twisted my neck to the side, trying to ease the stiffness setting in. But I didn't respond. What was there to say?

"You think you're the only one who does his homework?" He asked. "I knew you were looking into that Benz kid for weeks before you made your move."

It wouldn't have been hard for him to look into my extracurricular activities. I did use LC's WiFi for my research, after all.

"You didn't find anything about the ankle monitor beforehand because I set that shit up, Beck. I wanted you caught. Out of the way. Eyes off me for fucking once."

I glared up at him. "Looks like your plan worked spectacularly."

He kicked me hard under the chin this time. My head was knocked up and back, slamming into the cold metal that held me in place. Pain seared along my jawline, causing my eyes to water and my vision to blur.

“I thought it was foolproof. I should have known better. Unfortunately for you, my niece liked to talk just as much as she liked to borrow more money than she’d ever have been able to pay back. As if working off her debt as a waitress would have ever been enough. Frilly bitch.”

Andrea.

“It didn’t take much encouragement on my part to get her to spill anything and everything I could have ever possibly wanted to know about you and your little girlfriend and every other goddamn thing that’s happened inside LC over the last month. Didn’t keep her from owing me, but she was more than happy to run that fucking mouth of hers when given the opportunity.”

Not something he needed to share. I was more than well aware.

“When I caught wind of your one and only weakness, it wasn’t hard for me to put two and two together and point Detective Carson in the right direction. While it wasn’t enough to keep him off my back for long, it was enough to hit you where it hurt.”

I seared a hole in the floor with my glower as he spoke, taking in every word and accepting my fate.

There was always an end of the road for people like me. I don’t know why I thought I could be given the chance for a happily ever after.

I didn’t fucking deserve one, that was for sure.

“I’d hoped everything would go seamlessly and you’d just fucking kill yourself once she was out of the picture,” he chuckled. “Looks like I’m going to have to get my hands dirty after all.”

He stepped toward me, causing me to involuntarily wince. I knew what came next and there was nothing I could do to stop it.

There was a blur of movement just out of my line of vision, and then a sick crack. Mattia’s body fell over into a heap in front of me.

I watched in disbelief as TK let loose the bloody baseball bat she’d used to knock him out cold. It clattered to the floor as she jerked a semiautomatic pistol from the waistband of his pants and cracked off two shots to the back of his head before I even had time to comprehend what was happening.

She clamored over to me, fumbling to release me from the guillotine. “This motherfucker was going to *cut your literal head off?*” she shrieked, unfastening each latch that held the metal in place. “Who the *fuck* does this guy think he is? *King Louis?* Whatever happened to just *shooting* someone? *Goddamn*.”

I stood, rubbing the back of my neck with my good hand. “*How* did you find me here? I don’t even know where *here* is.”

She leaped on me, climbing me like a fucking tree and peppering me with kisses. I winced when she hit my broken wrist but held her against me with the other. “I woke up and you were gone. I’ve spent the last couple of days worrying myself sick about where you were and then it dawned on me. I was fucking mad I hadn’t thought of it sooner. You never turned your location off. I showed Hunt, wondering what the fuck you were doing so far at the edge of the property.” She kissed me again. “She confirmed that Mattia had some kind of fucked up torture chamber out here and insisted that I go. So I did. I found the baseball bat outside the door. I’ve already named him François. I’m keeping him as a souvenir.”

This woman was unbelievable. She *named* it? “A *souvenir?*”

“Yeah. From my first kill. *Duh*.”

“At what point were you going to tell me you knew your way around a firearm?” I asked.

She just shrugged. “What? Like it’s hard?”

I leaned away from her, looking at her incredulously. “I love you.”

“Love you too.” She kissed me sensually this time, then pulled away to ask. “How do you feel about the Dominican Republic? I googled and… if everything goes to shit and someone finds out I’m not actually dead, they won’t send me back here to actually be tried. Plus it’ll be a great place for Hunt to come visit me on vacation.”

I chuckled, kissing her again. “Sure.”

I’d go anywhere for her.

EPILOGUE

TK

3 MONTHS LATER

The sun beat down, overheating my bare skin as I lounged by the pool.

Apparently, my husband had amassed enough money in his career as a paid-for murderer to last us several lifetimes.

He'd spent a nice chunk of it on a beautiful beach house for the two of us and we'd both found ourselves more relaxed here than either of us had ever been. Moving south was a wise choice.

I was so relaxed, in fact, that I almost didn't hear him sneak up on me.

A shadow towered over me, blocking the sun from my line of sight like a big sexy eclipse. "You're going to burn, cuore mio."

I giggled. "That's probably okay seeing as most people think I already did." I curled my fingers under the waistband of his shorts and tugged him forward until he lost his balance and landed awkwardly on top of me.

He settled himself alongside me on the lounge chair. "You're so ridiculous sometimes," he said.

I gave him a taunting grin in return. He was right.

He ran his hand up the outside of my thigh, bunching up the material of my mesh cover-up as he went. He paused at the top, his large hand squeezing my hip bone and teasing the side hem of my bikini.

I kissed him gently, enjoying the way his smooshy fucking lips enveloped mine when I pressed into him. "Are you working tonight?"

One of the first things he'd done once we'd settled into our new home was to purchase a local bar. It wasn't as if we needed the income, but it gave him access to hundreds of IDs per night — he'd rigged up his scanner to permanently save the information from them until he could sneak off to his office for further research, sticking to his old morally grey code of ethics. People went missing on vacation all the time. It was much easier for him to fly under the radar here.

"I was considering, but currently I'm feeling like I have other *needs* that may have to take precedence."

He hauled me on top of him, my hips now straddling his. Running his hand from the base of my spine up my back, he forced me forward until our bodies were flush. His mouth covered my pulse point, sucking at my skin in a way that heated my core. I knew it would leave a mark, the mere thought of it causing me to shiver in his arms.

I ground against him, my center aching with need at the feel of his thick cock.

I sat back on my haunches, inching myself backward on his thighs to give myself better access.

I tugged his loose shorts over his hips. With his hard length in my palm, I stroked him from base to tip, enjoying every inch of him and reveling in the way he hissed at my touch.

He untied the sides of my bikini bottoms, tugged them off, and tossed them to the side.

I notched him at my entrance and sank down onto him, impaling myself on his cock and groaning at the glorious stretch of it.

I rolled my head back as I began to move, his hands guiding me the way he wanted. His thumb stretched across my pelvis, circling my clit. I could already feel my first orgasm building.

“I love you, Beck.”

“*Mmm…*” he groaned, pulling me down for a kiss. “I love you, cuore mio.”

I lifted myself away from his mouth, bouncing harder now, my body winding tight with tension.

I looked forward to the snap.

“God. *Fuck*. Will it always feel like this with you?”

“*Sei la mia vita*,” he mumbled, one hand gripping the base of my neck while the other continued controlling my hips. “*Always*,” he thrust up into me. “*Forever*.”

BONUS SCENE

TK

The last thing I wanted to do today was play *golf*. I'd spent enough time on the course at my former place of employment that I didn't care ever I ever saw another club in my fucking life.

I groaned, climbing out of the front seat of Beck's SUV when he opened the door for me.

"Come on, cuore mio. It's not *that* bad spending time with me, is it?" he teased. "Playing 21 holes with my little love is my idea of a *perfect* day."

I scrunched up my nose in confusion. "21? I thought there were only 18?" Maybe the Dominican Republic had different rules or something.

He tucked my loose hair behind my ear and ran his finger along the length of my jawline. "I'm including *you*."

My skin heated when his words registered, and suddenly spending the day golfing didn't sound like such a bad idea.

He slung his bag over his shoulder and stalked off. I scrambled to keep up — his long strides were sometimes too much for my shorter legs, but I wasn't about to miss a single second of whatever it was he had in mind.

I climbed into the passenger seat of the cart, the hot seat already sticking to the backs of my bare thighs.

Beck had seen fit to replace my numerous tennis skirts, despite the fact that I didn't need them anymore once I'd left my job at South Shore. He'd said they reminded him of the day we met, which was so freaking cute, but I rarely wore them. Today had been as good of a day as any to slip back into one.

The once over he gave me before sliding his hand across my lap and gripping my thigh before roughly pulling me across the bench seat and tucking me into his side told me I'd made the right choice.

I'd dreamed of having a love like this for most of my life — having someone so utterly obsessed with me. I'd worried the way he treated me would fade with time, but almost a year into our new life together and he was still just as enamored with me as I had always been with him.

"It's unusually *vacant* today," I noted. "Where is everyone?" I realized that I hadn't seen a single person since we'd arrived.

He hummed, inching a hand up my thigh as he steered the cart with his other. "I wanted to be alone with you today, pet." He looked at me out of the corner of his eye, gauging my reaction to the next part. "So I rented out the entire club and sent everyone home aside from those who will be feeding us later."

I grinned. "So there's no danger of losing you to a random cart girl out here today, then? *Phew.* I was worried. I've heard you have a thing for them," I said, pretending to be relieved.

We were already pretty far from the entrance now, and he jerked the cart to a halt. I wondered if he had any intention of actually playing golf at all.

I would soon have my answer.

He wrapped his long fingers around my upper arm and yanked me from the cart before spinning me around and bending me over the side of it.

The metal bar at the edge bit into my hip bones as he pressed my torso down flush with the hot leather seat.

Shoving my skirt up around my waist, he groaned as he kneaded the soft flesh of my bare ass. "No panties, love?"

"I didn't think I would need the—" My words cut off with a soft release of breath when he kicked my feet apart and dropped to his knees behind me.

His mouth sealed over my pussy and I moaned into the crook of my elbow.

A sharp smack came down on my ass cheek and he pulled away from me, "Do not muffle those little noises you make. I want every single fucking one of them, cuore mio."

He stood again and reached forward, threading his fingers through the back of my hair and fisting it tightly. He jerked my head back, freeing my mouth of obstruction by twisting it to the other side before shoving it back onto the seat and dropping his body back down behind me.

He held onto the front of each one of my thighs and licked a slow, torturous line from my clit to my entrance.

Having my pussy eaten was most definitely one of my favorite pastimes. But having Beck eat it from the back out in the open like this, where anyone could see us? *Otherworldly*.

He tongue-fucked me through an orgasm that absolutely wrecked me. My knees buckled, but he was relentless, holding me in place while he destroyed my goddamn soul.

I couldn’t have lifted myself from the seat if I’d tried, but it didn’t matter because apparently, Beck wanted me to remain in the position.

He grabbed a handful of my ass again and nipped at my heated flesh with his teeth before pulling something from his pocket.

The click of a lid opening piqued my curiosity. I lifted my head, tilting it as best I could to get a better view.

He massaged my skin again, opening me to him this time. A drizzle of lube cooled the overheated flesh there, causing me to shudder.

I wiggled my ass, anxious for him to fuck me already.

“So impatient,” he cooed.

The smooth tip of a silicone toy breached my tight ring of muscle. I gasped at the unexpected intrusion as he shoved what I now realized was a plug all the way in, the base resting flush against my skin.

Hole in fucking one.

He smoothed my skirt back down and righted the rest of my body, helping me back into my seat.

I squirmed, full and a bit uncomfy.

He sat back down next to me, an evil glint in his eye.

He put one hand on the wheel and another in his pocket, turning to face forward as he pulled off in the direction of his first hole of the day.

Or, I guess it was his second?

“Did you plan on actually playing today, or were you just wanting to sit your cute ass here and read while I do?” He knew me a little too well.

“What difference does it make now?” I asked, shifting uneasily in my seat. “Not like I can do much of anything now, aside from trying to focus on not dying.”

“*Oh, baby*. It’s killing you already?” I squeaked, jolting in my seat when the toy began to pulse inside my ass. “You *poor thing*.”

I supposed this was what I deserved for falling in love with a man who got off on literal torture.

“Be a good girl for me and try not to make too much of a mess of the seat. I would hate to have to make you lick it clean.”

FUCK me.

I spent the next three and a half hours in sheer agony, watching as this sexy — *absolute motherfucker, because fuck him for this one* — played the game he loved while edging me into a fucking puddle of feral goo.

I eyeballed him each time he swung, his muscles straining against the thin material of his white shirt. I was unable to form a single intelligible thought aside from how badly I wanted to drop to my knees and take his thick cock down my throat.

He pulled back around to the entrance and led me inside to the showers. I could barely walk without assistance, but tugged my small gym bag over my shoulder and went into the women’s locker room to clean up while he went into the men’s to do the same.

It was the oppressive kind of hot outside here nearly year round, so it didn’t matter that all I’d done was sit on the cart and suffer. I was sweaty and gross and definitely needed a quick wash before going into the restaurant to eat.

As I was toweling off, I remembered that there were not many other people around today and Beck was one hundred percent in the showers alone.

I tugged on a clean crop top and a pair of loose, flowy runner’s shorts that had most definitely never been running, wincing at the constant pressure in my ass.

Tossing my hair up into a quick messy bun, I bolted out the door and headed in the direction of the men’s showers.

Beck must have finished up around the same time I did because I ran smack into him as he was exiting the locker room.

With my hand on his chest, I attempted to shove him back through the heavy door.

He refused to budge, grasping my wrist and removing me from him as he turned me away from him and ushered me toward the restaurant.

“I’ve had e-fucking-nough, *Beck,*” I whined. “I need your cock.”

He continued walking me like a fucking dog toward a table near the far window. “I’ll let you know when you’ve had enough. Now, *sit*.”

Bitch, indeed.

He pulled a chair out for me and plopped me down into it, causing me to flinch and take in a sharp breath.

I was plotting my revenge — death by unfinished blow job — when the waitress came over to take our orders.

The toy began to vibrate again, this time a constant buzz. I gave Beck a death glare. He talked to the woman with a cocky smirk on his face — something about Caesar salad — his eyes never leaving mine as he spoke.

"And for you?" She said, turning to face me. And then immediately asked, "Are you okay?"

At the exact moment I opened my mouth to speak, Beck turned the vibration to a much higher intensity and I was pretty certain she could hear the buzzing now.

I snapped my mouth shut, focusing all of my attention on the decorative glass cylinder of seashells in the middle of the table.

Damn, those were some nice seashells.

"My wife just got a little overheated out there today. Didn't you, love?" He scooted my chair next to his, jostling me unpleasantly. He stroked up and down my back. "Could you bring her some water?" He placed a chaste kiss on my temple. "And I think she'd also like a salad."

He better be fucking thankful that I actually did want the salad.

She nodded, scribbling our order down on her notepad. The moment she turned to walk away, he turned the toy off again.

I melted into him. "Please take it out," I murmured.

I wasn't above crying to get my way.

It probably wouldn't have taken much more from him for the tears to be real. I was a mess.

"You want me to fuck you quick and dirty in the bathroom, cuore mio? Just get it over with and give you some relief?"

"Fuck, please. Yes," I replied.

I pushed back from the table and pretty much ran to the single-occupancy restroom with Beck hot on my heels.

"Two holes left to round my day off, so you're gonna have to give me that pretty mouth first, baby," he said, closing the door behind him and twisting the lock into place.

"Fucking *gladly*," I responded, dropping to my knees and tugging at his shorts.

His cock bobbed free, smacking into my waiting palm and I took it upon myself to eagerly guide him past my pouty lips.

I looked up at him with all the love and adoration I constantly felt and hoped that he could feel the emotions radiating from me as I took him deep.

“I love you so fucking much,” he groaned.

I relaxed around his length and he pumped into me, hitting that glorious spot near the back of my throat that I didn’t know existed until Beck.

My throat heated, the intensity of it prickling over my skin and spreading throughout the rest of my body.

I shattered, no longer able to control the movements of my head, moaning at the near-suffocating feel of it.

I could’ve screamed but… yanno… my mouth was full.

“Perfect. Fucking. Girl.” His hips jerked with each word, his thumb dragging across my bottom lip. “Such a good little whore, getting off on having your throat fucked.”

My pussy pulsed, begging to be filled by him.

Thankfully, he could read me like no one else.

He pulled out of me and lifted me to my feet, turning me and nudging me forward to lean onto the bathroom countertop.

This club was a nice place, and I was suddenly glad that we weren’t in some grody public bathroom. Not that it would have stopped us if we were.

He slipped my shorts off, and slid his hands up my outer thighs, bringing one over to gently twist the plug out of my ass.

I sighed in relief, my body sinking harder into the cold granite of its own accord.

My senses were fuzzy at best from the events of the day.

Beck stepped into me, stroking his cock over my sensitive flesh. I arched into him, grunting impatiently.

“I know, baby,” he assured me, twisting the ends of my long hair around his fist.

He tugged my head back and thrust into me, filling me completely.

He fucked me just like he’d promised: quick and dirty.

He stroked my inner walls, hitting my G-spot with near-lethal precision.

His hand snaked around to my clit, the perfect pressure there sending me spiraling over the edge again at the same time he spilled into me.

We stayed like that for a moment, our breathing in sync as we came back down to earth.

“I think I’m going to need more than a fucking salad to recover from what you’ve put me through today.”

He pulled out of me and righted his clothing before tugging my shorts back into place, not bothering to clean me up first.

He liked having me walk around with his cum dripping between my thighs.

I liked that he liked it.

“Anything you want, love.” He smirked. “And after, we’ll have dessert.”

My neck and chest flushed at his words. Beck’s idea of dessert had nothing to do with food and I wasn’t sure how much more we could get by with while still at the golf course.

But for him, I was always willing to push the limits.

Fucking fore.

ALSO BY GENNA BLACK

Haverhill Burning

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I know this book was dedicated to her, but I need to include her here as well. I went through the hell of losing my best friend to cancer just after I published Haverhill Burning. Lindsey, I think of you and miss you so many times every single day. With every small goal I meet, my heart breaks all over again that you aren't here to celebrate with me. Everything is so much fucking harder without you, but I know you'd be so proud of me for putting myself out there. I love you so, so very much.

Alice Stanco, fuck… where do I even start? I needed a friend desperately, and for whatever reason, the Universe saw fit to bring us together. I don't deserve you, but I truly couldn't make it through a single day without our endless conversations and borderline-scary ESPN. This book would not have been possible without your endless support — of my writing, my chaos, and my mental health. Thank you for being my person, my best friend, and the only human in the world who just gets it no matter the circumstance.
I love you 3,000.

To my husband: Yes, you're third on the list. Sorry, not sorry. Those messy plot points never stood a chance with you on my side. Thank you for always lending me your brain, supporting me in everything I do, and believing in my abilities when I can't seem to see the bigger picture. You keep me going and I could not ask for a better partner in life. I love you so much.

My TGC Tated Mates, what was life like before you guys? I can't seem to remember. Thank you for putting up with all of my shenanigans and for your never-ending encouragement. You are my biggest cheerleaders and my best friends, and I hope you know how much of a positive impact you've had on my life. I named my FMC after all 12 of you. I hope you like her. She’s almost as batshit crazy as we are.

To my alpha readers: Ashley, Miranda, Kali, Sam, and Alice. Y’all are seriously the dream team. I can safely say that this book would not be what it is without you. You make me better every single day. I am so thankful to have you in my life. Your friendship is unmatched. Thank you for always making me laugh. Everything is fun x10 when you’re involved.

To my beta readers: Jess, Brooke, Steph, Melissa, Amy, and Lauren. You’re each so special to me and I’m thankful to call you my friends. I couldn’t ask for better betas, and I hope you’ll stick with me for…ever.

Special shoutouts: Melissa and her husband for helping translate properly when I had the crazy idea to make my MMC speak a language I know nothing about, Kali for coordinating my absolute chaos and talking me off of the ledge every other day — AND FOR THE STICKERS. I should probably also thank Sam at this part… for googling literally everything and LARPing scenes of this book with her husband just to, “make sure they work.” Do with that what you will… Brooke for ensuring that Beck did not speed reverse through the crematorium, and last, but not least, Jess for listening to me plot my next three books while I was still supposed to be writing this one.

Thank you to my editor: Tiff.

Thank you, Amy, for proofreading and supporting me in all the ways you have over the last year+, and for flipping me off (both when I deserve it *and* when I don’t).

I feel like I just accepted an Academy Award or something. I hope I didn’t forget anyone. If I did — that wasn’t me, that was Patricia.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Genna Black is an author of Romantasy, Romance with a Dark Comedy twist, and absolute chaos.

She lives in the Southeast U.S. with her husband and children. She suffers from debilitating ADHD, which absolutely shines through in her writing. She is an introvert above all else, which makes being an author her ideal career path, as she prefers books (and coffee) to people.